POLICE · BUDGET · EDITION

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FAMOUS CRIMES

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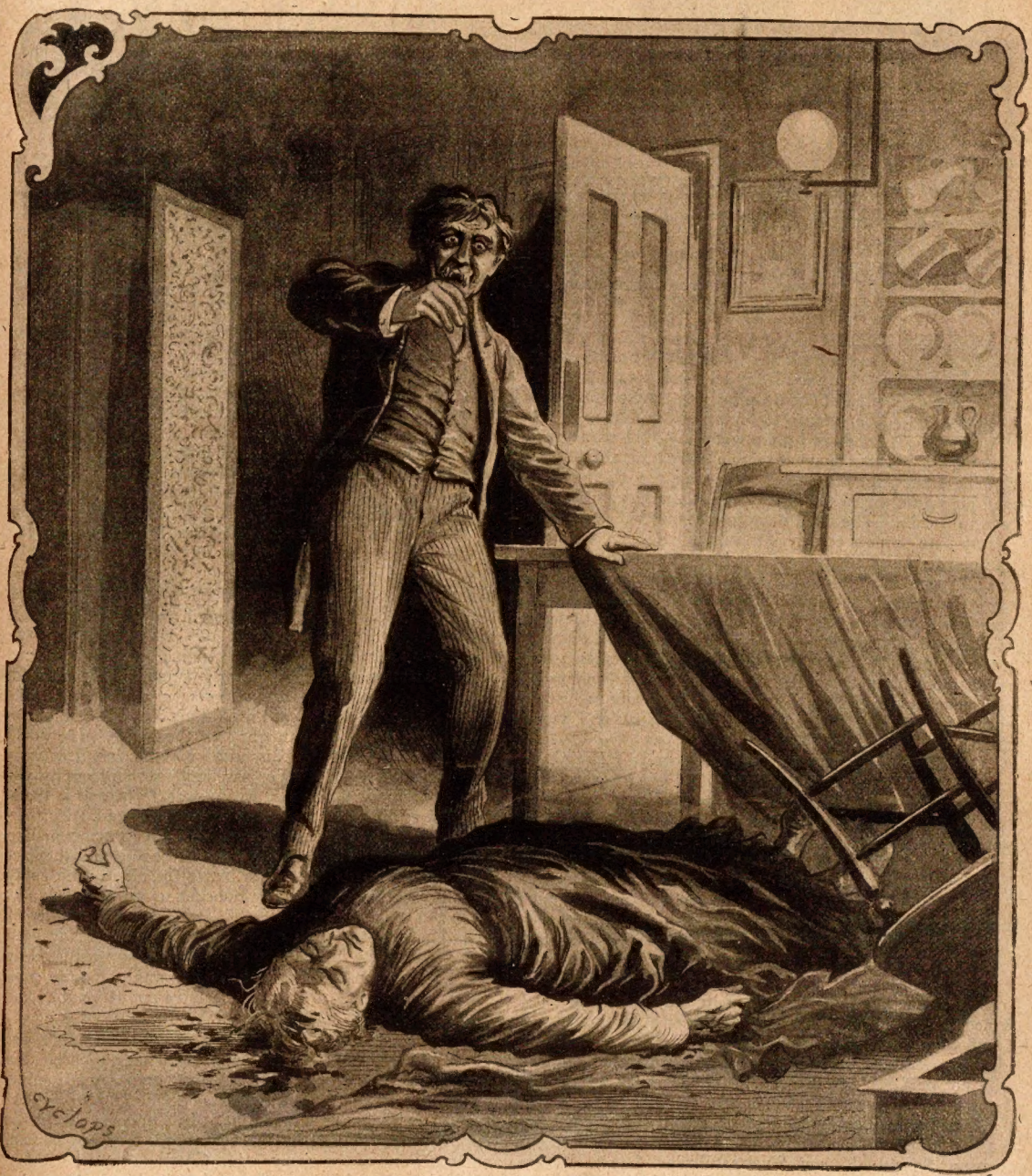


FINDING THE BODY OF MRS. SAMUELS.

(See "The Burton Crescent Mystery.")

Vol. VII.—No. 84.

The Burton Crescent MYSTERY.

How an Aged Woman was Barbarously Murdered on a December Night in 1878, and how every Attempt to Run the Culprit to Earth Resulted in Dismal Failure.

"The mystery remained undiscovered.
Had I been the finder-out of this secret,
It would not have relished amongst my other discredits."
—SHAKESPEARE, "Winter's Tale," Act V., Sc. 2.

"MURDER will out!" Never was a proverb so contradicted by actual fact as this one. In the history of crime the student will find abundant proofs that mysterious murder very often remains mysterious to the end, and that many a brutal crime goes unavenged. At this moment there are, walking abroad and rubbing shoulders with the unsuspecting crowd, scores of men on whose foreheads is stamped, though invisibly, the brand of Cain. The deed of horror committed, they have by fortunate chances contrived to escape detection and have returned to their daily toil—to their meals and their sleep—as unsuspected as the most innocent of their fellows. They carry their deadly secret with them through life, and they bear it with them to the grave. Sometimes—as in the case of Sherrard, of Norwich—they are driven to confession by the ceaseless torture, the perpetual pangs of remorse; but much more often they are able to deaden the qualms of conscience and to follow their own pursuits as though their cupboards held no grinning skeleton to taunt and mock them.

Of crimes—undiscovered and unavenged—hundreds of examples could be given. The identity of the monstrous madman who turned the East-end of London into a shambles in 1888 will never now be disclosed. The man who got into a railway carriage between Putney and Waterloo and there murdered Miss Elizabeth Camp, hiding the dead body beneath the seat before he got away, remains unknown. If he is alive, he walks abroad, and you or I may involuntarily have touched him in the street. The slayer of old Miss Hacker, whose body was found in 1879 in the coal-cellar of a house in Euston Square, was never brought to justice, and a similar crime discovered in Harley Street in 1880 remains a profound mystery to this day. Montagu Place, Bedford Square, was the scene of an atrocious murder in 1828, an old woman named Mrs. Jeffe being barbarously done to death by some unknown miscreant whose identity will not be revealed till the great day when all secrets are known and all mysteries made clear.

This part of London is often referred to as "the murder neighbourhood," for weird crimes were committed in Euston Square, Fitzroy Square, Harley Street, Burton Crescent, and Great Coram Street, all of which are no great distance from the just-mentioned Montagu Place, and none of the perpetrators have ever been found or the mysteries brought to light. Who was and where is the murderer of young Mr. Tower, near Queen Elizabeth's Walk, Stoke Newington? Who killed that young girl at Peasenhall? What wretch murdered and mutilated that pretty child at West Ham? At whose brutal hands did Mrs. and Miss Squires come by their fearful death in 1872, when their murdered bodies were discovered in Hyde Road, Hoxton? Murder will, indeed, speak with most oracular organ on some, on many occasions; but nearly as often it is dumb! "Foul deeds will rise, though all the world o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes," Shakespeare declares; but enough has been written to show that it is not so.

Strangely enough, undiscovered crimes were more rare in the old days before the introduction of our present system of police and prior to the bringing of the detective art to such perfection. Why is this so? It is difficult to say; but the fact that the present-day criminal is better educated than his ruffianly predecessor may somewhat account for the anomaly. He takes steps to render discovery as difficult as possible; whereas the old-time criminal by his crass stupidity ran his head straight into the noose. He would lurk about the scene of his crime and be found actually wearing property—clothes or jewellery—stolen from his victim. The modern assassin avoids such folly, and is therefore more difficult to identify and apprehend. Furthermore, juries in these enlightened days are not inclined to convict except on the very clearest evidence, and they act on the presumption that it is better for ninety-nine guilty men to escape than for one innocent to suffer wrongfully. Take the case of Hannah Dobbs, tried for the murder of Miss Hacker—to which crime reference has already been made—in 1879. She was acquitted by a jury actuated by an idea that the evidence against her was not quite sufficiently convincing. But would she have got off on the same evidence in 1829 or 1819? I think not.

Having, therefore, established the fact that murder has often been indulged in with impunity, I may proceed to a discussion of a very strange case of undiscovered crime which greatly interested the general public in 1879. That was a remarkable year for crime. In February the public curiosity was aroused by the sensational trial, conviction, and execution of the unspeakable Charles Peace. In May, Catherine Churchill's murder of her husband attracted a great deal of attention. Then came the discovery of the mutilated remains of Mrs. Thomas in the Thames at Rich-

mond and the subsequent arrest and conviction of the fiendish Kate Webster. The discovery in Euston Square, with the strange history of Miss Hacker, the Bastendarfs, and Hannah Dobbs, followed the Richmond tragedy, and

Dashed out into the night.

prior to these we were plunged into the intricate affair which I am now about to describe.

This murder, as a matter of actual fact, was committed in the declining days of 1878, but as its elucidation occupied the police in the early part of the following year, it really belongs to the catalogue of crimes occurring in 1879.

The scene of this strange tragedy was Burton Crescent, where, by the way, the houses, although large and of rather imposing structure, have not borne the best repute at any rate during the last forty years. Most of them are let for apartments, and in one of them—almost next door to the one under notice—a murder was perpetrated in 1884, the victim being a woman named Mary Ann Yates, whose slayer has never been captured.

Is there some curse upon this part of London? The superstitious would almost believe so, considering the number of terrible crimes perpetrated in its midst.

At No. 4, Burton Crescent, in the winter of 1878, resided Mrs. Rachel Samuels, a widow seventy-five years of age. Although past the allotted span, she was an active, bustling woman of good health and excellent spirits. She had two sons and a married daughter alive, but preferred to live without any of her relatives, and she did nearly all of the necessary house-work herself, although the dwelling consisted of as many as fifteen rooms. She had always been of a saving, not to say penurious, turn of mind, and it was supposed in the neighbourhood that she had accumulated considerable wealth. She had latterly contrived to do without a regular servant, and the only assistance in the house-work she received was from a young girl, who generally came in the mornings and left in the evenings. At night the only occupant of the house in addition to Mrs. Samuels was a gentleman lodger, to whom she let two rooms at a very substantial rent. It was noticed that the old lady was very careful whom she admitted into the house after dark. If a knock or ring was heard at the hall door after dusk she was in the habit of observing the caller through the letter-box before opening, and if she was not quite satisfied with her inspection the door was only opened to the extent of the chain, thus preventing any unauthorised entrance. In spite of these precautions, Mrs. Samuels was mysteriously murdered.

On Wednesday, December 11, 1878, some workmen were engaged on repairs in this house, and it was known that they were there at three o'clock in the afternoon, at which time the widow was left alone with them by the young girl who was in her employ. Shortly after midnight her lodger returned, letting himself in with a special and peculiar house-key, and he proceeded upstairs to his own parlour. He found the gas alight in this room, but was somewhat surprised and annoyed to find that no supper had been laid for him. Mrs. Samuels provided his meals, and it was her custom to lay the table for supper every night about eleven. Intending to forage out some eatables for himself, the lodger went downstairs, and at last found himself in the front kitchen, where he witnessed a spectacle awful enough to strike dismay into the stoutest heart.

He saw the body of Mrs. Samuels lying in a pool of blood on the floor, and a cursory glance convinced him that she had been murdered, for her head was frightfully injured and her hands bore some terrible wounds. He found that the body was almost warm, showing that the crime was of recent occurrence, and in his hurried glance round the kitchen he perceived blood almost everywhere. He tore upstairs and dashed out into the night. First he acquainted the police with the fact of the dismal discovery, and then proceeded to the house of Mr. Judah Samuels, the son of the victim, and related the tragic news.

In the meanwhile the police effected an entrance into No. 4, and Divisional Police-Surgeon Hutchinson was sent for. They entered the kitchen in a body and discovered Mrs. Samuels, quite dead, lying on her back with wide-open eyes, gazing at the ceiling. The surgeon found that the frightful wound on the back of the head had been

Great crowds gathered outside.

caused by some blunt instrument, and there were also some dreadful bruises on the hands and face. She had been dead, it was thought, for about three hours, and it was evident that she had seen her assailant and had made a

great fight for life. A thorough examination of the room was immediately commenced, and among other discoveries it may be noted that a woman's cap was found—unstained with blood—near the body. If this cap belonged to the deceased, as seemed likely, it must have fallen from her head before her murderer had rained on her those shocking blows. A screen was in the room, and behind this article of furniture was found a large piece of wood with nails in it. This had evidently been recently split, for the edge was quite white, and it was conjectured that it broke in two when the deceased was struck with it, though it was strange that the corresponding piece could not be found. On this piece of wood—which was obviously part of a hat-rail—there was much blood and some few hairs of the same light tint as that of the murdered woman's.

It was then observed that the foot of the stairs leading to the floor on a level with the street was quite wet, as if a recent attempt had been made to wash out some stains, and an old piece of flannel, faintly stained with blood and still

"WHAT YOU SAY MAY BE USED IN EVIDENCE AGAINST YOU."

damp with water, was also discovered. Entrance into the house had been effected by climbing over the front railings, dropping into the area, smashing a pane of glass in the door, and thus getting into the pantry.

The police theory was that Mrs. Samuels had been aroused by the smashing of glass, had hurried downstairs, and had there confronted the intruder. Something in his look must have told the poor old soul that he—or she—meant murder; she turned to fly, got as far as the fifth stair, and was then struck down from behind. Other blows followed, and then she was dragged to the position in which she was found. The assassin then went into the next room and washed his hands. Evidently his trepidation was intense, for stains of blood could be traced all over the dresser and the sink. It was conjectured at once that the murderer must have been well acquainted with the customs of the inmates and all the arrangements of the house, and the question at once presented itself—How did he get away? Every door was discovered to be locked on the inside! He might possibly have left by the way he entered, but the area is a deep one, and though a person could drop into it, it was not easy to understand how he could have dragged himself out of it. His manner of exit was a mystery which quite baffled the police, and it remains so to this day.

That the motive for this dastardly murder would prove to be robbery was the general opinion; but it does not appear that any of the old woman's property was missed at first. Her sons were able to state that she had £25 in a secret drawer, and this sum was found untouched. The two Mr. Samuels were quickly on the scene, and Superintendent Williamson and other officials who had been summoned from Scotland Yard made a thorough search of the entire premises. Great crowds had gathered outside, and when the superintendent left the house at 9 p.m. rumour said that he had made important discoveries. Neighbours declared that an elderly man had been seen hanging about the house for some days—the policeman on that beat had noticed him, too—but he vanished completely after the discovery of the crime, and we can only wonder if this mysterious stranger was the murderer.

The police, however, were very tenacious of the theory that the deed had been done by someone known to the victim, and they began to make inquiries with a view to tracing the movements of any former servants of Mrs. Samuels. In this way they came to hear of Mary Donovan, so soon to become notorious.

This person had formerly been in the employ of Mrs. Samuels, and had, indeed, resided with her as servant for ten years. She had left her service some considerable time before the murder, but used to call upon the old lady occasionally, and sometimes did a day's work for her.

Now, it leaked out that she had been observed to leave the house shortly before the murder; indeed, she was the last person seen to come out of it. The authorities immediately decided to interrogate Mary Donovan, and for this purpose sent several officers to 42, Lancaster Road, Notting Hill, where she resided with her husband. The manner of her arrest will be described immediately, but it is neces-

sary to state here that subsequent examinations showed that Mrs. Samuels's dress-pocket had been removed by the murderer, who had likewise taken an old wedding-ring and a new pair of felt boots.

The inquest on the body of the unfortunate woman was held at the Silver Cup Tavern in Cromer Street, Gray's Inn Road, before Dr. Hardwicke, as Coroner for East Middlesex.

This place—some distance from Burton Crescent—was selected because of the tremendous excitement occasioned in the neighbourhood of and by the mysterious murder, and even as it was the court was inconveniently crowded.

The first witness called was Mr. Judah Samuels, who, after the jury had viewed the corpse and the scene of the tragedy, testified that the body was that of his mother, Rachel, aged seventy-five. He last saw her alive on the previous Saturday, and she was then in good health. The lodger gave him the alarm, and he went and aroused his brother, and both proceeded to the house, where they saw the body and identified same.

John Borschidski was the name of the lodger in question, and he deposed that he was a musician by profession, and had stayed for some time with the deceased woman. He returned home at five minutes after midnight on the Thursday morning, and described in what condition he had found the body.

Fanny White, a girl employed by the dead woman to clean up, said that she left the house on Wednesday night. In the course of conversation that day the deceased had told her that Mary Donovan and her sister Kate had been to see her the previous evening, and that she had had occasion to scold Mary, who was the worse for drink. She never expressed any fear of or dislike to Donovan, and only complained of her drinking habits.

William Johns, 468E, was the policeman who was first called to the house by the lodger. He saw the body, and at once sent for Dr. Kendrick, of Tavistock Square. The latter gentleman was then called, and he stated that he had examined the body of the woman found killed at 4, Burton Crescent. The hands were clenched, the face black with dirt, as though it had been smeared over by dirty fingers, the right eye was blackened, and there were two severe cut-wounds on the back of the hand which penetrated to the bone. A knife with some marks of blood on the handle had been found, and with regard to the piece of hat-rail, he did not think it could have inflicted the wounds, which were five inches long and appeared as if caused by a blunt hatchet or chopper. Dr. Hutchinson, however, was positive that the woman had been killed with the piece of hat-rail. He deposed that he had found fresh, moist blood on it, and also some light-coloured hairs, which certainly corresponded with those of the murdered woman. He had made a post-mortem examination, and as a result had found that there was no actual fracture of the skull; but there had been great effusion of blood beneath the scalp. He added that the lungs, heart, liver, etc., etc., of the deceased were quite healthy. The actual cause of death was concussion of the brain and hæmorrhage.

The funeral of Mrs. Samuels took place on December 15, 1878, at West Ham, and in the meanwhile much excitement had been aroused by the sensational arrest of Mary Donovan, who was brought up at Bow Street before Mr. Flowers, the prosecution being conducted by Mr. Poland, while Mr. Abrams appeared for the prisoner.

She proved to be about forty years of age, short and somewhat stout, and with nothing at all criminal in her manner or appearance. Mr. Borschidski was again examined, repeating his former evidence, and in cross-examination he stated that to his knowledge the prisoner had been much liked and trusted by the deceased.

Inspector Kerby proved the arrest of Donovan. He said that, in company with some other officers, he called at the prisoner's house, and the door was opened by a woman, who called out, "Mrs. Donovan, you are wanted." The prisoner came down almost immediately, and the witness said, "We wish to speak to you privately."

They went upstairs to the first floor back room, and there they found a man, to whom the prisoner said, "Donovan, someone wants to speak to you." The inspector replied, "No, it is you we want to speak to. We are two police-officers, and are going to say something to you. Be careful how you answer, as what you say may be used in evidence against you. Mrs. Samuels has been murdered, and you were the last person seen to leave the house."

The prisoner, continued witness, hesitated a moment, and then said, "I was there. I went to get the address of my sister, which I had not been able to get when I called there the previous night." Kerby asked, "What night did you call last?" and she replied, "On Wednesday night. It was about 8 to 8.30, and the lodger let me in. A gentleman called to see apartments, and was there a long time. He looked like a paper-hanger or something in that line. At last," she went on, "Mrs. Samuels came down and sent me for a haddock, which I could not get. I brought her a bloater, and when I gave it her she said that I need not remain any longer. I then went away, and left the man in the parlour. I think Mrs. Samuels knew him."

"I need not remain any longer."

The witness then asked her to produce the shawl she was wearing that night, and he remarked on it a stain, which he thought was blood. He asked to see her dress, and she said, "I wore this one," and he noticed distinct stains of blood on the front of it. Something was said about a pair of boots being missing, and the prisoner's husband said that he had just bought his wife a pair of boots in the New Cut. The prisoner said that the stains were iron-mould. She was searched, but no property except some pawn-tickets was found on her. He learnt that she had been out till very late on the night of the murder, and that she had been drinking heavily since the previous Sunday. After making these discoveries, Inspector Kerby took the woman into custody, and she was removed in a cab to Bow Street Police Station, exclaiming two or three times on the way, "I am not afraid!"

At this stage the prisoner, who seemed to feel her position rather acutely, was remanded for a week; while at the inquest, Kerby stated that a pair of boots similar to

those taken from Mrs. Samuels and the missing ring had been offered in pledge by a woman. He said that Mary Donovan's statement about going to get her sister's address was false, as her sister's whereabouts was well known to her, and she had been at the latter's house the week before. The prisoner had volunteered the statement that she had cut the deceased's toe-nails for her on the Tuesday night; yet the nails were found to be long, standing out half an inch beyond the flesh of the toes.

During the period of one of the four remands Mary Donovan sent a letter to one of the sons of the deceased. It was ill-spelt and ill-written, but the substance of it was as follows:

"I am very sorry for the misfortune that has befallen all the family; also for the unfortunate way I have placed myself, as I should be the last person to do such a thing. If I had done such a cruel thing, you know that I knew where she kept the best things upstairs, without taking her boots and ring. But God forbid, as she was always good to me, and I should serve her at any time. As regards the blood that was on my skirt, it was not that of your poor mother, but was of quite a different nature, which I have suffered much for a long time. It was my own blood. I hope mercy will be shown me, although I am quite prepared to meet death, for this is not the way I thought to part with your dear mother, as she often asked me not to forget her, and when her poor daughter died she did the same.

"May her soul rest in peace! Another thing I wish to say. If I had been the cruel one, I had plenty of time to change my clothes from the Wednesday evening till the Friday at 12.

"This is all I have to say.

"I am your obedient but miserable servant,

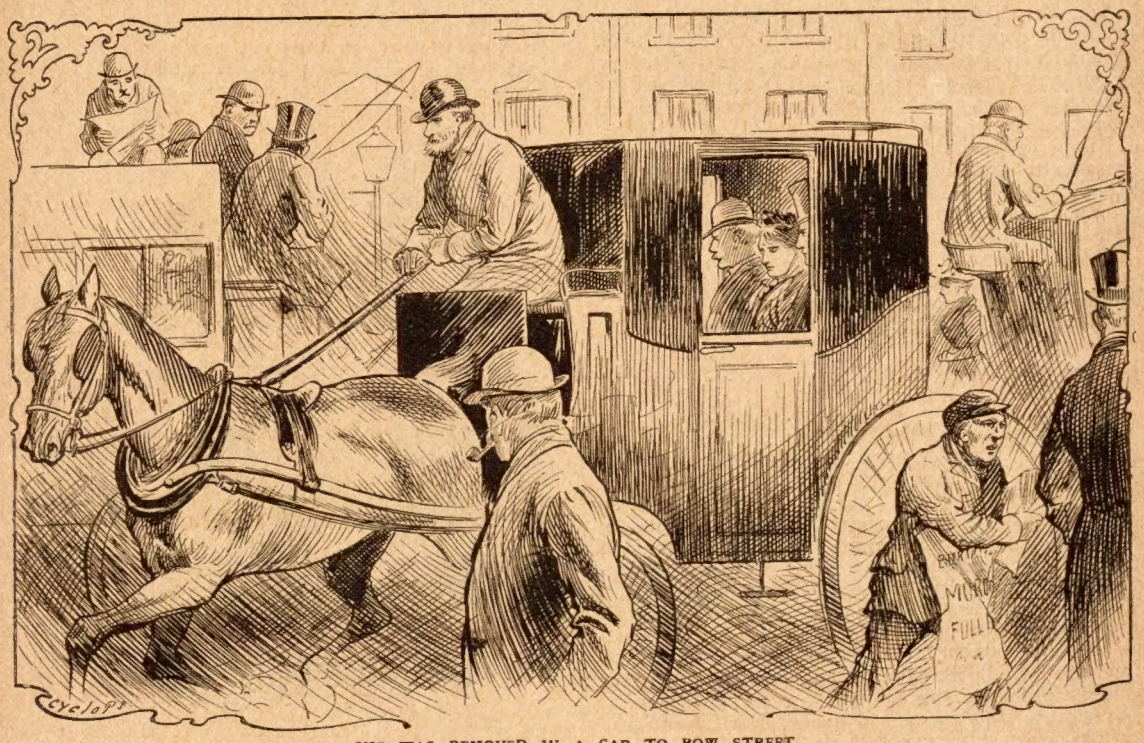
"MARY DONOVAN."

Inspector Lansden, at a subsequent examination, stated that he was in the cab with Kerby when they took the prisoner to Bow Street, and he noticed, when they were nearing the Waterloo Road that she tried to tear off the front part of her dress, and he told her to desist.

Professor Redwood said he had examined the prisoner's clothing, and if the tests could be relied upon, the stains were human blood.

Alfred Colquehaye, assistant to Mr. Folkard, a pawnbroker, of 160, Blackfriars Road, said a woman had offered a wedding-ring in pledge on a recent occasion. He thought it was the prisoner, and had picked her out amongst some women at the police-station; but he was unable to swear to her identity, and it transpired subsequently that Donovan was a regular customer, whose appearance was well known to the witness, although he had not seen her for some time.

In spite of these rather suspicious facts, Mrs. Donovan was discharged from custody on January 10, 1879, the police being unable to bring any more direct evidence to connect her with the crime. The magistrate declared that no jury would convict on such fragmentary evidence, and the prisoner left the court, crying slightly, but evidently relieved.



SHE WAS REMOVED IN A CAB TO BOW STREET.

No doubt she was entirely innocent. There would have been no need for her to have entered the house through the area, as the deceased would have readily admitted her. She made no attempt to escape after the murder, nor had she tried to remove the stains which were upon her clothes. The police seem to have jumped too readily to the conclusion that she was guilty, and made no actual attempt to find the culprit from any other quarter. The line of action adopted by the authorities undoubtedly materially assisted the real criminal to escape.

It may be mentioned here that suspicion attached itself to the men who had been at work in the house; but they were found, and each was able to prove his innocence of any knowledge of the crime. Mrs. Samuels's murder was a mystery then, and remains a mystery now.

It is at least a curious fact that between January and September of the year 1879 three women were suspected of murdering their mistresses. Of this trio, Mary Donovan and Hannah Dobbs were discharged from custody; but the police made no mistake in the case of the death of Mrs. Thomas, and the fiendish Webster was hanged.

CRUEL CONVICTION OF . .

Mrs. Scarborough,

The Jolly, Buxom Innkeeper of Huntingdonshire.

"The tears of the compassionate are sweeter than dewdrops falling from roses on the bosom of the Spring."
—DODSLEY.

JUST a century and a-quarter ago, when the punishment for offences was meted out with the most indiscriminate severity, and as frequently as not the accused, unless having overwhelming proof of innocence, was more likely to suffer death than be acquitted, there lived on the North Road, near Bugden, in Huntingdonshire, a widow named Scarborough. For half a century and more her husband had kept an inn, of the sign of the George. The jolly, buxom hostess was very popular, and the hostelry was one of the best on the road; for there the mail coach stopped, and the accommodation afforded was of the very best class, and most distinguished travellers, including the aristocracy, were accustomed to put up at the inn. Indeed, the George was looked upon as one of the best and busiest houses of accommodation upon the North Road, and Mrs. Scarborough not only had a considerable sum of money left her by her late husband, but was making a splendid income from the profits of her inn, being assisted in the business by her only daughter, unmarried, a beautiful girl of nineteen, who had made the heart leap in the breast of many a young squire of that part of the country.

Accomplished, unusually attractive and charming in her manner, Miss Scarborough undoubtedly induced many to visit the house; but her mother, business-like and agreeable to all comers, was looked upon as a cheerful and jolly hostess, who entertained her guests in the most homely way, regaled them with nothing but the best, and was respected and loved by all who knew her, including the servants, who numbered some six or eight.

Indeed, it was an exceedingly happy household, and every driver and guard of the mail coaches which changed at the George had a good word for Mrs. and Miss Scarborough.

During a very busy day at the inn, to be particular, on October 17, 1814, the postman, a man named Cox, brought a letter to the George, and asked the hostess or her daughter to decipher the name and address for him. It must be remembered that in those days the country letter-carrier was frequently unable to read or write, and had to sort his deliveries out by asking the clergyman, squire, or some educated person to assist him. Cox frequently called for this purpose at the George. Upon this particular occasion the letter was addressed to "W. S. Preston, Esq., care of Rev. Dr. Maltby, Bugden, Huntingdonshire." Now, the doctor was a frequent guest at the George, for it was nothing unusual then for the clergyman to hob-nob with the sporting squire, and take his grog and pipe in the private parlour of an inn; so, according to the statement of Cox the postman, Mrs. Scarborough took the letter and promised to hand it to Dr. Maltby to give to his pupil, young Mr. Preston.

And here it was thought the matter ended. Nothing more was heard of the incident for nearly two years. O ye of the present generation, with your telephones, your telegraphs, Scotland Yard, your flying locomotives, and lightning-speed motors, and perfectly organised detective force, think of two years elapsing before a missing letter could be traced! Such was the time, however, to establish the destiny of this particular missive.

But it will now be necessary to explain to our readers the history of this letter and the nature of its contents. Richard Preston, Esq., of Lincoln's Inn, barrister-at-law, and M.P., had a son being educated with the Rev. Dr. Maltby, at Bugden, and to him he had sent by post a letter containing a £20 note. The young gentleman, not receiving any communication from his father for a considerable time, wrote asking the reason. By return a letter was again sent, an inquiry made at the General Post Office, and the note stopped at the Bank of England.

These inquiries, after a considerable lapse of time, elicited what purported to be the following facts: John Sharp (clerk to Mr. Preston) declared that he had handed the letter to Mat Cromartie, a messenger, who swore that he had delivered it to the bellman, who put it in his bag. John Fisher, letter-carrier for Charlotte Street, Blackfriars Road, did not remember receiving it, but if he did he was sure that it would be forwarded the same evening to the General Post Office, where the key of the bag was kept. Phillip Franks, clerk in the G.P.O., was equally certain that if the letter were put into the bag in Charlotte Street he had no doubt that it had been forwarded; and James Ward, teller at the G.P.O., who made up the bags for the York mail, had not the least doubt that it had been forwarded to Huntingdon by the coach.

So far so good; but there was little to be used as evidence in all that. But the postman of Bugden said that he remembered distinctly receiving the letter from Huntingdon, which he delivered to Mrs. Scarborough, and that she said, "I know the gentleman for whom it is addressed, and will deliver it to him. You had better leave it." The man Cox also declared that Mrs. Scarborough had told him that the letter had been delivered.

Then after all these inquiries proved nothing, for Mrs. Scarborough informed those making them in the most open manner that she had given the letter to her waiter to return to Cox the letter-carrier, as Dr. Maltby did not come into the house the next day, and that he had done so, Thomas Standish, the waiter, confirming the statement.

And so the second stage of the incident closed, and no more was heard of the matter for upwards of a year. Business prospered at the inn, and Mrs. Scarborough was the life and soul of the house, more cheerful than usual, and certainly, judging from appearances, there was little upon the good hostess's conscience.

One day, however, a change came o'er the scene. A post-chaise drove up to the door of the George Inn, and two strange-looking individuals entered the parlour and called for refreshments. As the buxom landlady, her face wreathed in smiles, served them, one of the gents, with a significant wink at his companion, rose from his chair, drank off his glass, and threw down the money for the reckoning.

"Mrs. Scarborough, I believe?" he said gravely. "I am here upon very unpleasant business. I must arrest you in the name of the King for feloniously detaining a letter, the property of the General Post Office, and for appropriating to your own use the sum of £20, in the form of a Bank of England note. You must come with me."

Surprise, fear, followed by a dizzy sensation, seized the widow, and she sank fainting into an easy chair. At that moment the daughter entered, and, bewildered at the scene before her, for one of the officers had slipped on the handcuffs, she shrieked for help, and the room was immediately filled with servants and those of the customers who were using the house.

Without ceremony, the poor widow was hurried into the post-chaise, and driven to Huntingdon Gaol. Affairs at the George Inn may be better imagined than described. Not a soul believed in the widow's guilt, and offers of assistance, monetary and legal, were forthcoming from every quarter, the only feeling being that of quickly establishing the poor lady's innocence. But the Post Office of London were the prosecutors, and when the Huntingdon Assizes were held in the July of 1817, Jane, widow of John Scarborough, was indicted for felony.

In the meanwhile, most extraordinary evidence was got up to prove the poor lady's guilt. Mr. Jervies, clerk to a solicitor at Peterborough, said that he had an interview with a Mr. Bond, another attorney, of Leicester, together with Mrs. Scarborough, at the Bell Inn, Stilton, a house kept by a Mr. Green, son of the accused, by a former husband. They had a claim against Green for the amount of £48,

which Mrs. Scarborough paid for her son by giving them one note for £20, one for £10, three for £5, and three for £1.

Bond put the notes in his pocket, they being handed to him by Mrs. Scarborough. On the Thursday following he paid the note to a Mr. Price, of Leicester. This was September 20, 1816, when it was sent to Mr. Fourdrinier, the wholesale stationer of London. Henry Hart, clerk to the last named firm, took it to the Bank of England, where it was stopped as stolen property, the note having been in circulation for two years.

Undoubtedly this looked rather black against the widow; but she feared nothing, asserting her innocence, and bidding her daughter and her friends to be of good heart.

Mrs. Scarborough, who appeared but very little disconcerted at the trial, and who had her beautiful daughter near her, gave in a written defence to the following effect:

She trusted in her deliverance from the present charge, which she did not blame her prosecutors for instituting against her. She could only lament that she had fallen under it through the most strange and unhappy circumstance. She trusted the honourable judge and jury who tried her would allow her to know herself incapable of such a crime or dishonesty. She had held her situation for thirty years—for twenty years as innkeeper herself, since the death of her husband.

"I Am Here Upon Very Unpleasant Business."

She had brought up a family of sons and daughters in respectability, all of whom, except the one beside her, were well married, and themselves had families. Many thousands of pounds had passed through her hands in carrying on an extensive business. The first families, including the nobility, were in the habit of using her house. These would not suspect her of dishonesty, much less that she should be guilty of having committed such an act as that with which she was charged.

She declared emphatically that she had no knowledge of the existence of this letter. Letters were frequently left at her house for strangers. The £20 note she received from a stranger, who came from Stilton, and changed horses only a day or two before. She had no means of finding out who he was. He sat on the dickey of the coach, and her servants would prove that she so took it. But she added that she did not believe it was the same note which she was charged with paying to Mr. Bond.

She lamented that the gentlemen of the Post Office, who were, in fact, both prosecutors and witnesses against her, had thought proper to bring her to trial. All that she could rely upon for her defence was a character, until that time not merely unimpeached but free from suspicion. She deeply regretted the absence of the Lord Bishop of Lincoln, and of John Hodgson, Esq., as they would have added to the honourable testimony she should produce in favour of her general character.

She trusted to the favourable reception she hoped to receive from the court and the jury, that she and her family might be once more restored to happiness and peace of mind; and that which alone could restore her to society and the respect of mankind, which she and her family had so long enjoyed, was a verdict of "Not Guilty."

There was applause in court upon the reading of this defence.

For the defence, Thomas Standish swore that he returned the letter to Cox, stating that he did not place it in his hands, but threw it to him on the kitchen table, at which he was at the time standing. Both the housekeeper and the ostler declared that they saw Mrs. Scarborough take a £20 note from a stranger on the day before she paid Mr. Bond; but they could not swear to the identity of the note.

Then came witnesses as to character, and they included Sir James Jubilee, George Thornton, Esq., Lawrence Reynolds, Esq., Dr. Maltby, George James Gora, Esq., banker, Dr. Alvery, and other well-known Huntingdonshire families.

Chief Justice Gibbs tried the case, and remarked upon the strong testimony and coincidence of circumstances to prove the prisoner's guilt. There was, however, he intimated, great allowance to be made for persons in her position not being able to account for the possession of notes which might be changed by strangers passing or using her house, and of whom she knew nothing. The jury would have to say on which side the evidence preponderated, and return the verdict accordingly.

Having delivered himself in such manner, and probably believing that the twelve good men and true would take some considerable time in making up their minds to return the verdict, the learned judge left the bench and drove home to his hotel to supper, for it was getting very late.

As he conjectured, the jury were unable to come to a decision until the evening had far advanced, the poor widow being kept in the agonies of suspense, for the longer they were absent the more she dreaded the verdict.

At length they had made up their minds, and the judge was awakened from his nap and brought back to the court, capon-lined and flushed with wine, agreeable to listen to the verdict.

To the horror of everybody assembled that verdict was "Guilty," and Chief Justice Gibbs, in a most business-like manner, proceeded to pass the sentence of "Death."

Two piercing shrieks rent the air—one from the unhappy woman in the dock, the other from the lovely girl, who had stood by her mother who had been so dear to her, and her helpless form was carried from the court-house, bringing down the curtain upon one of the most painful trials ever known in this or any other country.

He Liked Fame.

THE late Lord Houghton—better known as Monckton-Milnes—had a great liking for gathering together at his house at various times all the celebrities of the day. He had been the host of every "lion"—literary, social, military, naval, theatrical—for many years. One morning at his breakfast-table a certain author remarked to his lordship's daughter that the notorious malefactor, Charles Peace, had been executed the previous morning.

"Ah," she said thoughtfully, "perhaps it's as well; for if the jury had thought fit to acquit him, he would assuredly have been invited to dine here."

An Old French Crime.

IN the year 1551, a young girl in Paris was going to midnight mass at St. Opportune's Church. On the way she was attacked by a ruffian, who, having killed her with a hammer, decamped with such jewellery as she had. He left the hammer beside the body and the weapon was identified as belonging to a poor smith residing near. The latter was arrested, and put to the torture in order to extort a confession. But he stoutly maintained his innocence of the crime, and eventually succumbed to his fearful injuries. Twenty years went by, and the murder was forgotten. At the end of that time another murder was perpetrated in Paris, and the culprits taken red-handed. Before he was executed, one of these confessed that he had broken into the smith's shop, had stolen the hammer, and himself committed the murder for which the innocent had suffered.

Life of Charles Peace.

CHAPTER XLIV.—(Continued.)

HE ran down the side street with the speed of an antelope, turned the corner, and was lost to sight before the policeman had retraced his steps and gained the corner of the mews.

He looked round for Peace, but even at that moment he did not suspect anything was amiss, concluding that he had returned to what he deemed was his own house.

The housekeeper and shopman were aroused from their slumbers by the constables who had been searching the premises.

No burglar was found, but a coat and hat were discovered on the sofa in the drawing-room; these belonged to Peace, who was by this time far away.

"Where is the governor?" inquired one of the policemen.

"Governor!" exclaimed the jeweller's assistant. "He's at Fulham."

"It's taken him a short time to get there!" cried the man at the door, "seeing that he was here not five minutes ago."

"Here!" ejaculated the housekeeper. "Oh, it's impossible—he left hours ago."

The policemen exchanged blank looks—the truth for the first time dawned upon them.

"What sort of man is the governor?" inquired one quickly.

"A tall, stout gentleman, with big bushy whiskers," answered the shopman.

"Well, this is a sell," murmured another constable. "Why, I'm blessed if that fellow wasn't the burglar!" Then, turning to the man who had kept guard at the door, "You had no right to let him go, Jenkins. It was your duty to detain him."

"Don't blame me—it's no fault of mine. Why, I could have sworn he was the master; so would anybody."

"You had no right to let him go."

"But I don't know that he has gone."

There was a loud peal of laughter at this declaration. Everybody is so clever after a mistake has been made and discovered.

And this was clearly a very great mistake.

A search was made in every direction for the missing robber; bull's-eyes were flashed in all directions, the adjacent streets underwent inspection, as did also several houses which were known to be the resort of thieves, but Peace was by far too artful a rascal to seek refuge in any of these; it was not his practice to do so at any period of his life.

The police were at fault. There was, however, one consolation. Nothing had been stolen. Not an article of any description had been removed from the premises.

On the contrary, something had been left behind—this being Peace's coat and hat, which the police took possession of as trophies.

They, however, could not conceal from themselves that they were greatly in fault.

Peace having got once clear off, ran his hardest until he had reached Seven Dials. Then he observed at some little distance off a policeman taking his lonely round. As he was without his hat and coat, he deemed it expedient to seek concealment. He went up a narrow passage and hid himself in a dark gateway till the patrol of the night had passed.

He watched him from his hiding-place and saw him walk with measured steps on his beat.

Luckily for him, the policeman walked on without suspecting for a moment that anything was wrong, and Peace did not emerge from his safe retreat till he felt assured that the watchful guardian of the night was far removed from the spot.

He then sallied forth, and crept cautiously along a narrow, dark street which led into Long Acre. A four-wheeled cab, driven by a sleepy driver, drove into sight.

Peace at once hailed it. The cabdriver looked surprised, as well he might be, at seeing a man in such a strange costume.

"What's up?" he cried, looking down at our hero.

"Why, I'm in a devil of a pickle; that's what's up," returned Peace.

"I've been to a masquerade, and some vagabond has stolen my hat and coat. I haven't very far to go, but don't like to walk home in this plight. Drive me to the corner of Fetter Lane."

"I'm taking the horse and cab to the stables, and don't want another fare," said the driver, who was evidently like the animal he drove—fairly done over.

"It isn't far," said our hero. "I'll pay you well. Drop me at the corner of Fetter Lane."

"You're a rum 'un," answered the man. "Jump in."

Peace did not desire any further altercation—he opened the door of the cab and jumped in. The vehicle rumbled over the stones, passed through Great Queen Street, then Little Queen Street, and proceeded along Holborn till the corner of Fetter Lane was reached; then it was brought to a halt.

"There you are!" cried Peace, handing the driver half-a-crown. "Now I am within a dozen doors of my own home."

The cabman took the proffered coin and drove off. Peace went up Fetter Lane, and looked to the right and left, but no one was visible. He waited till the noise of wheels had passed away, and then he went back to the corner of the lane. If he could reach his lodgings in Leather Lane without attracting attention all would be well. How to complete this he had not at that moment determined.

Should a chance policeman be in Holborn, or in any of the adjacent streets, a man without a coat and at that hour in the morning would be sure to attract his attention and excite suspicion.

Peace had been wonderfully successful thus far, but there was no telling what might follow; whether he had better walk leisurely along or make a bolt of it, he could not for the moment determine.

At length, after a little reflection, he thought it would be best to adopt the former alternative; he therefore crossed Holborn in a quiet, easy, self-confident manner.

A half-inebriated pedestrian, who was reeling homewards, called out:

"Halloa, governor, taking a moonlight airing?"

Peace made no reply, but passed on till he had reached the corner of Leather Lane, without attracting the notice of anyone else. In a few seconds after this he gained the side door of his own residence. But he would not enter without first of all ascertaining that no one was watching his movements. He peered cautiously around. All was silent, not a solitary individual was visible. He slid the key into the lock, opened the door, and entered. Then he closed it as noiselessly as possible.

He felt that he had escaped by almost a miracle, but did not at the same time feel assured that all danger was over. He ignited a small hand lamp, which he placed in the grate, so that its rays should not be visible at the window of his room.

He began to reflect on the events of the past hour or two, and had some misgivings when he remembered that his coat and hat had been left behind in the house he had entered. He was well assured that the former did not contain any papers or other articles which would lead to his identity.

The coat itself he had bought ready-made at a shop in Bradford, so that there was no fear of his being recognised by means of that garment, since he was not known to the shopman who served him. The hat bore no maker's name on the inside. He was, therefore, well satisfied that he could not be traced by that means.

But there was no telling.

Clues to thieves were sometimes obtained in an extra-

ordinary manner, and he did not feel altogether assured of his safety. However, he had no alternative but to quietly await the issue. If Laura Stanbridge rounded on him he was lost: but he did not for a moment imagine she would do so—certainly not unless she was hardly pressed.

He thought all these matters over before he turned in for the night, and bitterly regretted having attempted to rob the jeweller's shop, since it had been attended with such disastrous consequences

He was by no means comfortable when he retired to bed. He was troubled in his mind, and had in consequence but a restless night.

On the following morning, upon reviewing the events of the preceding night, he was forcibly impressed with the egregious blunder he had made, and his own want of foresight. He had a considerable amount of stolen property concealed in the premises he occupied. To dispose of this was his first consideration. After he had partaken of a hearty breakfast, he packed up his spoils in as small compass as possible, and at once set out with the same to the Jew fence in Whitechapel.

Old Isaac was at his post, and upon the goods being handed over to him for inspection, he began as usual to depreciate their value.

This Peace was well used to; it was a way the Jew had. He had many pleasant little ways, which were at once tantalising and irritating. But it was now imperative for our hero to get rid of the articles, even if he had to make a greater sacrifice than usual.

The Jew offered about one-third of their value.

"I won't take it; I'll smash them all up first, you rapacious old sinner!" cried Peace.

"Vell, vell, smash 'em up; much good that'll be. I thought you'd more sense than to talk in that way. You never find me anything but honest and straightforward in my dealings with you."

"Get out!" exclaimed Peace, in an angry tone. "You get worse and worse, and I shan't come again unless you mend your ways. I know where to dispose of them, man. Don't you think you're the only bloke who does things on the cross."

"Vell, then, there—I don't like to turn away a customer, particularly an old friend like yourself. I'll give you thirty pounds for the lot."

"What! for the clock and plate included?"

"Vell, yes, of course, I mean that. Be reasonable, don't be too extortionate. Ve must all live."

"I'll take forty. I ought to have fifty at the very least, but I can't do with less than forty, for I am just now very hard up."

The Jew shook his head, and said he couldn't give forty.

After a deal of haggling, a bargain was struck. Peace took four and thirty pounds for goods which were worth considerably more than double that sum in the very lowest market, but he had no alternative, and the rapacious Jew suspected this.

Peace pocketed the money, and returned to his rooms in Leather Lane.

He, however, deemed it advisable to leave his lodgings for a few days, till the attempted burglary at the jeweller's was not quite so fresh in the recollection of the police authorities.

He wrote a letter to Laura Stanbridge, requesting her to call and see him. This he sent by a boy. In less than an hour after its delivery his old Sheffield companion presented herself.

"Well, Charlie! What's up now that you have sent for me?" said Miss Stanbridge. "Anything amiss? Have they found your crib?"

"No, not at present," returned Peace. "But you see, old girl, this little affair has been a great mistake. I managed to dodge them, but my coat and hat have been left behind; and, therefore, I think it as well to bunk—to leave this place for a few days."

"Certainly; the best thing you can possibly do. Well?"

"Who gave notice to the bobbies?"

"Who? Why, a gentleman who saw you climbing over the roofs, from one of the top windows of a house opposite."

"Hang it all, I have been a fool! Never thought of that."

"That's how it was. Everybody knows that in the neighbourhood. You have had a narrow escape, and so have I," said his companion.

"Do they suspect that I reached the roof from your house?"

"No, I am glad to say they do not; if they had I should have been sure to have heard of it. No one, I believe, suspects you were concealed in my house—nevertheless, we've had a narrow squeak for it."

"Keep dark—say nothing about the subject to anyone. Hear, but say nothing."

"Trust me for that. Don't you think I am complaining, Charlie, or am likely to desert you. All that I can do to serve you at any time you may count on. Even now I don't like to leave you to shift for yourself, but I don't think they've got the faintest clue. The coat and hat are at the station, so I've heard, but they've not been able to trace their owner. So be of good cheer, old man, and better luck next time," said Laura Stanbridge, as she took her leave.

CHAPTER XLV.

We must turn back to earlier scenes in our narrative that we may gather up the tangled threads of this tale.

The reader will remember the burglary at Oakfield farmhouse, described in the opening chapters. He will call to mind the Bristol Badger being shot down by the girl, Jane Ryan, who afterwards gave her evidence at the trial of Gregson, which went far towards ensuring the conviction of the hardened criminal.

Gregson had ruthlessly murdered the girl's sweetheart some years before the period of the Oakfield House burglary.

Jane Ryan had watched and waited, and she had not done so in vain. An inward monitor had whispered to her that sooner or later she would be instrumental in hunting down the man who had robbed her of one whom she valued beyond all else in the world.

She felt that her mission was fulfilled after Gregson had expiated his crimes on the public scaffold.

But the death of this wretch did not remove the canker worm which had found its way into the heart of the young girl. It did not blot out from her recollection the terrible and appalling scene of her lover being stabbed to the heart on the lawn of her master's house.

Jane Ryan became an altered woman; she was, as we have already intimated, deeply imbued with superstition, and, moreover, under the impression that her days were numbered. Nothing could dispossess her of this idea.

The last time we took a glance at Jane was in the fourth number of this work, when Richard Ashbrook told her the story of his love, and asked her to become his wife. The interview between the two was of a touching and tender nature. Jane did not positively refuse, but she bade her master seek somebody who was more worthy of him than she was herself. She told him also that she was mourning for one who was dead and gone.

All this was not particularly complimentary to the substantial and honest yeoman, who began to suspect that there was some rival in the field. He could not for a moment understand that she could be so true and constant to the dead carpenter.

He was as honest as the day, would not wrong man or woman, or indeed any living creature, but his powers of perception were but limited, and Jane was a puzzle to him.

Poor man, his was by no means a solitary case; hundreds and thousands of women, both before and since, have puzzled and perplexed men of far greater intellect than he could boast of.

Richard Ashbrook considered the matter over. He reasoned with himself, and endeavoured to quench the fire which burnt within his breast.

He was advised to try a change of scene, and left Oakfield for a while upon a visit to Mr. Jamblin, of Stoke Ferry Farm.

He flirted with little Miss Jamblin, who was at this time not out of her teens. He went out shooting with her father and brother, and passed many jovial and enjoyable evenings with his old friends.

But despite all this he could not forget Jane Ryan; her image was for ever presenting itself to his vision.

His friends were discreet and considerate enough not to mention her name; they knew perfectly well his feelings towards her, and hoped that "he would get over it."

But Ashbrook did not find it so easy to get over it as he had imagined.

"When a man is over head and ears in love," said Mr. Jamblin, senior, "it takes a strong rope to pull him out of the pit into which he has fallen.

"She be a rare good 'un of her sort," said the old farmer to his son one day; "but she be naught but a serving wench after all.

"And Master Richard can do better. He ought to strike at higher game."

"Pipple ought to do a number of things they don't do,"

answered young Jamblin. "It ain't easy for a man to right himself when he be capsized by a woman, no matter whether she be a serving wench or a duchess—and for the matter of that in many cases one be as good as 'tother."

"Eh, lad!" cried the farmer, opening his large eyes and staring at the speaker. "Them's your sentiments?"

"Well, yes, and I ain't ashamed to confess to them."

"Don't you tumble into the same pitfall as Richard Ashbrook," said his father, in a much more serious tone. "Mind ee don't do that."

Young Jamblin burst out into a loud fit of laughter.

"All right, father; you've no right to be afeard, as far as I'm concerned."

Richard Ashbrook now entered the room and cut short the conversation.

"Ah, Master Richard," exclaimed the elder Mr. Jamblin, "Patty tells me you be home-sick and be goin' to leave us. We can do a little longer wi' ee."

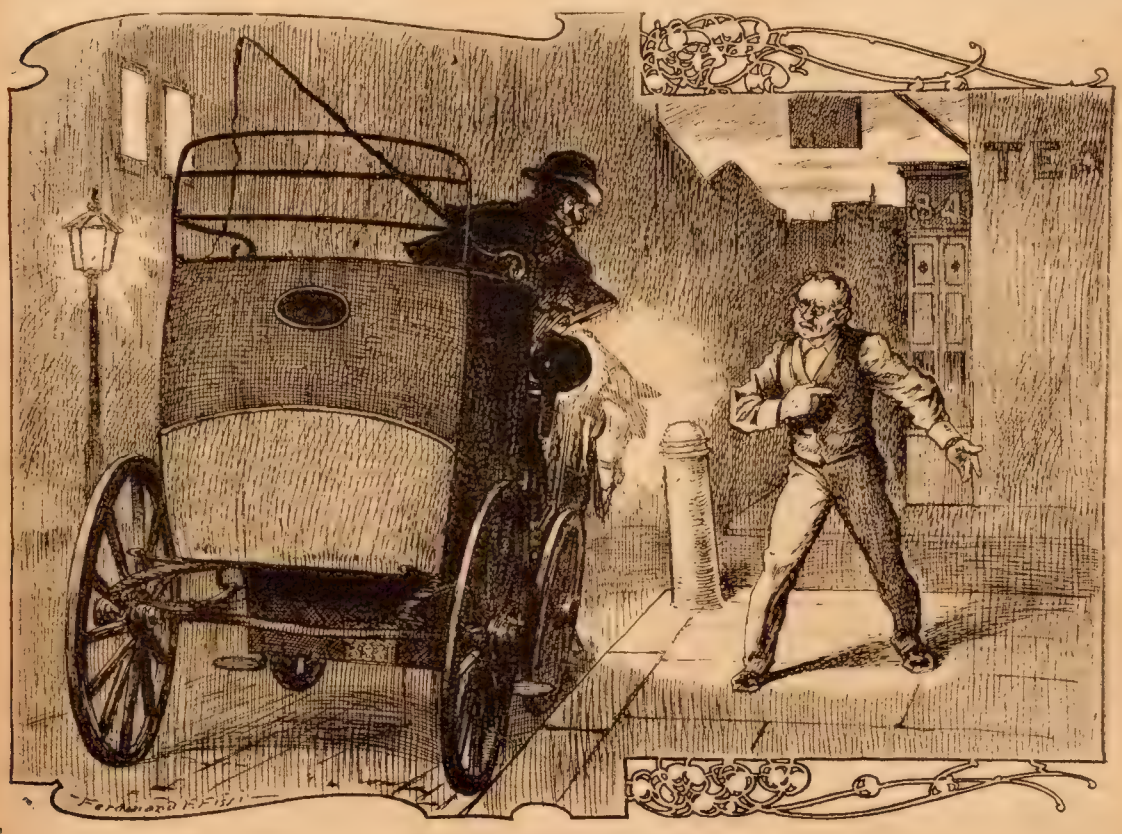
to make him as comfortable and happy as possible, by unremitting attention.

Indeed, her cheery manner and pretty ways had done much to dispel the gloom which he had found so difficult to shake off.

When left alone with her father's visitor, she besought him to remain a little longer as an inmate of Stoke Ferry Farm and he could not find it in his heart to give a denial to the request.

He did remain for another week or so; nevertheless, despite the pleasant society in which he found himself, he could not forget the thoughtful, pensive girl of Oakfield House.

Upon his returning home Richard Ashbrook found his brother and sister anxiously awaiting him. The greetings were cordial and affectionate, for the Ashbrooks were a most united family, and it was seldom, indeed, that



"I'M IN A DEVIL OF A PICKLE!"

"I do not doubt that," returned Ashbrook, "and the change has done me a world of good, but——"

"Oh, ay, but I know what ee's goin' to say—you've got your own affairs to look after, and all that sort of thing. Well, please yourself—every man knows his own bis'ness best."

"He's not going as yet," cried Patty, who now entered.

"And why not, lass?" inquired her father.

"Because I won't let him," returned the young girl, perking up her pretty features in a most comical way. She was the pet of the family, and her father doted on her. She was always goodhumoured, and had, withal, a keen sense of humour.

Patty Jamblin was long-haired and blue-eyed, with a clear white skin. Her hands and forearms were a little red and rough from manual labour, but her neck and forehead were like polished ivory. Her eyes were mild and candid, and could be roguish when they pleased. Her hair was chestnut, and instead of being tortured into ringlets, as was the fashion among farmers' daughters, it was worn plain.

She was very partial to both the Ashbrooks, and during the sojourn of Mr. Richard in her father's home had striven

anything transpired that in any way disturbed the harmony of the establishment.

Jane Ryan, as usual, was busily engaged in her household duties, which she went through in a mechanical, unobtrusive manner.

It was wondrous to see the tender solicitude, the care and consideration displayed towards her by the honest, horny-handed farmer. Certainly, if ever a man was devoted to one of the opposite sex, that man was Richard Ashbrook. His attachment was not so much expressed by words as by manner.

Weeks and months passed over, and his fondness for Jane became deeper and more intensified.

Everybody knew perfectly well that matters could not go on thus for any great length of time. Either the young farmer would have to press the question still closer, or else give up all thoughts of the girl. As to sending her away, that was not to be thought of for a moment. His brother and sister would not consent to such a course, to say nothing of Mr. Richard himself

And so, after a long, and, it might be said, almost silent, wooing, and watching, Richard Ashbrook once more took

heart of grace, and besought Jane Ryan to become his "for better or for worse."

His brother and sister were at this time paying a visit to the Jamblins.

"Jane," said Mr. Richard one evening, when the day's work was over, "I want to ha' a word or two wi' ee, lass. So when ye've finished cleaning up, just step into the parlour for awhile, will ee?"

She nodded and said, "I will be with you presently."

In a few minutes Jane, having washed and touched herself up, entered.

"I dunno whether you guess why I ha' desired to speak to 'ee," he said, in hurried manner; "an it does not much matter whether 'ee do or not, for what's to be sed can't remain any longer unsed, and that's the truth on't. You see, Jane, it bean't o' no yoose for a man to fight agen anything he ain't got any power to grapple wi. It's against common sense—we none of us can do it—a man ain't no yoose agenst a ghost or speerit."

"I don't understand your meaning, Mr. Richard," murmured Jane.

"I mean," he said, endeavouring to come nearer to the mark, "you see, I mean, gal, we ain't any of us got any control over ourselves as far as affairs of the heart are concerned. If a man loves a woman as I do you"—this was a home thrust—"it's no yoose telling him to find somebody more worthy of him, and all that sort of thing, 'cause he don't think anybody is more worthy of him—he believes the woman he loves is more worthy and better than any other in the world."

Jane nodded, but made no other reply.

The farmer went on—he was certainly floundering a little, but had made one or two palpable hits nevertheless.

"And so, Jane, my dear gal, I ha' thought over and over agen of what you sed when I asked you to become my wife, and I ha' endeavoured to think no more of you, but find it ain't of no yoose. Love is summat like the wire worm; when it once effects an entrance it ain't so easy to extract it."

The simile was not, perhaps, an elegant one, but it was pretty well for a farmer.

"Have you thought of what I sed to ye, now many months ago?"

"I have thought of it, master," said Jane, with a mournful cadence in her voice, "and I've thought how proud and happy I ought to be, seeing how devoted, how kind you are in every way, but it is not so much on account of myself as it is for you that I have hesitated."

"Hesitated?"

"Oh, Mr. Richard, you want a bright, cheerful companion, not a poor broken-hearted creature like myself. If I could forget the past—if I could be the same as I was a few years ago, the matter would be different. As it is, I know not what to do. Do you persist in pressing your suit?"

"Do I persist? Of course I do!" cried the farmer. "Shall always persist while both of us are alive."

"Oh! while we are alive!" repeated Jane Ryan.

The farmer looked surprised—not to say a little alarmed.

"Well, we are not going to die as yet, let us hope."

"No; let us hope not."

"And if you marry me," he exclaimed, suddenly assuming a tone of confidence and cheerfulness, "you're so good a girl that you'll live for my sake."

His companion smiled, and he wound his arms round her neck.

"Now I've got 'ee!" he ejaculated, "and you consent to be mine for better or for worse?"

"I consent!" cried Jane. "It is to be, and I consent. How is it possible for me to do otherwise?" she ejaculated, looking up towards the ceiling. "Yes, Master Richard, I consent."

Richard Ashbrook felt as if a load had been lifted off his heart. He clung to her, and covered her face with passionate kisses.

Thus ended his wooing. When his brother and sister returned from Stoke Ferry Farm he made them acquainted with all that had occurred, which did not at all surprise them.

Then the village gossips, as well as their more immediate neighbours, had prognosticated how it would end.

James Ashbrook purchased a farm adjoining Oakfield. He and his brother were partners, but Richard furnished the residence attached to the adjoining farm. To this he took his young wife after their union, which took place in less than six months after the proposal and acceptance of the same by Jane Ryan.

If Richard Ashbrook had been a devoted lover he was an equally devoted husband. He treated his young wife with uniform kindness, and indulged her in everything.

In a twelvemonth she presented her husband with a daughter, which he declared was the image of herself.

After this the shadow which had fallen upon her, and which marriage had failed to dispel, became deeper and deeper still.

For her husband's sake she endeavoured to assume an air of cheerfulness, and strove as best she could to make him believe she was happy. He did his best to make her so, but despite all this there were many in the neighbourhood who shook their heads, and said that Mrs. Richard Ashbrook was fading away. She believed so herself—had always been under that impression. What she told the farmer before her marriage was true in substance and in fact.

She was a broken-hearted creature, and not all the wealth in the world—not all the attentions of her devoted husband could remove the cankerworm which had crept into her heart.

Some persons are affected by sorrow for the departed in the smallest degree possible—they are enabled to forget the past and look hopefully to the future; while others are struck down with such force that they are never able to rally—people are so differently organised.

It is true Jane Ryan had lived on for some years, but it was a sort of living death. Even her marriage was but a gilt and painted funeral.

She had given her hand, and, indeed, her heart—or what remained of it—to the honest, devoted man who led her to the altar, and since the union she had been a loving and exemplary wife, but she could not divest herself of the miserable fact that her days were numbered. The end came.

* * * * * *

In a large, darkened room of Richard Ashbrook's house the wan figure of a woman is stretched. The bedstead on which she lies, with its heavy hangings, presents something of a funereal aspect. Its occupant is Jane Ashbrook. She is calm, placid, and resigned. Her features wear a chastened and almost angelic expression. The ruddy hue of health has long since left them; this is succeeded by a delicacy of the skin which is something akin to waxwork. She does not moan or murmur, but remains more like an immovable statue than aught else.

The dusky shadows of figures are creeping about the room. These are James and Richard Ashbrook, and their sister, Maude.

The sick woman has been dozing for an hour or more. Presently she opens her eyes, and murmurs the name of her husband.

He is by her bedside in a moment, and bends fondly over her.

"You are better, Jane—say you are better," he says, in an anxious tone.

"Better, because nearer home," was the response.

An expression of anguish passed over the features of the farmer.

He sits down in a chair by the bedside of the sufferer, and remains silent and thoughtful. Maude creeps up to the sick couch, kisses her sister-in-law fondly, and in a minute or so after this leaves, in company with her brother James.

Richard is left alone with his sick wife.

He is a strong, powerful man, full of robust health, but feels now so borne down as to be almost prostrate.

For weeks his wife had been thus—a mere shadow of her former self. Her malady appeared to be incurable.

Dr. Bourne, her medical attendant, had been unremitting in his attention; but he confessed himself quite unable to define the nature of the complaint—it appeared to him to be more mental than physical, and for that reason it was beyond the reach of medicaments.

He did his best, however, but failed to arrest the decay which was so silently and secretly taking place.

The door of the room was gently opened, and Doctor Bourne entered in company with the nurse.

He looked at his patient, felt her pulse, watched the expression of her countenance for some little time, and then shook his head.

"Worse!" whispered the parson.

"Weaker, decidedly weaker; you must give her as much nourishment as possible."

He went to a side-table and wrote a prescription; then he left.

The nurse went downstairs to show the doctor out. Mr. Ashbrook left the sick chamber and met her upon her return.

"What does he say about his patient?" Ashbrook inquired anxiously; "anything else?"

"She is weaker, and requires careful watching and the utmost care," returned the nurse.

"What is your opinion, Mrs. Deacon? Tell me candidly—for you have an opinion—and are a good judge in matters of this sort."

"Well, sir, 'while there's life there's hope,'" said the woman.

She did not compromise herself by giving expression to this hackneyed quotation.

"Yes, that we all know," muttered the farmer. "That's but a poor consolation. You had better get a little rest now; I will sit up for the next two or three hours with your mistress."

The nurse retired, and Richard Ashbrook returned to the sick chamber.

He sat himself down in an easy-chair. In a short time after this his wife sank into a sound slumber, and the farmer himself dozed.

He was awoke by the sick woman softly calling him by name.

"What is the day of the month, Richard?" inquired his wife.

"The day of the month? It's the twenty-first."

"The twenty-first of October, isn't it?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"Ah! nothing particular. You see, my dear, good husband, I was not born under a fortunate star. I had my nativity cast a long time ago, and the horoscope proved that I was born under an unfortunate star. It showed also——" She paused suddenly, and closed her eyes.

"What, dear—what did it show?" inquired the farmer.

"That between the twenty-first and twenty-fourth of October, 1874, a change would take place. Now I know what it means."

The farmer felt like one who had received a heavy blow. He comprehended her meaning, and big beads of perspiration fell from his temples.

"She believes that she is about to die," he murmured; "but this is very terrible!

"Ye mustn't gi' way, Jane—mustn't gi' way to superstition," he cried; "there bean't a mossel o' truth in these horoscopes—not a mossel o' truth in anything o' the sort. Don't 'ee believe a word o' such nonsense. Maybe after all it's that what's making 'ee so ill."

His wife smiled.

"My own dear Richard," she murmured, "don't give way—be of good cheer."

He wound his arms around her, and embraced her fondly.

Presently the nurse entered the room, and bade him seek rest.

He retired to a sleeping chamber adjacent to that occupied by his wife; the few broken sentences she had uttered troubled him much, but hope as yet had not deserted him.

The next day Mrs. Ashbrook appeared to be a little better—was more cheerful; but as it waned, and evening crept on, she seemed to be quite listless and heedless of all around.

Those about her thought she needed repose, and did not trouble her with unnecessary questions.

"Where is Maude?—let me see her!" she said all of a sudden to her nurse.

Maude was her daughter, who had been so named after her aunt and godmother, Richard Ashbrook's sister. The child was brought in and placed in her mother's arms. She hugged the little thing, who gently sank to sleep on her mother's bosom.

An hour passed—mother and child were still locked in a close embrace.

Dr. Browne came. He glanced at the two figures on the bed, and then looked eagerly at the nurse.

"I think they are both asleep, sir," said the latter.

"How long have they been so?"

"For nearly an hour."

"Please remove the child, Mrs. Deacon."

The nurse drew the little thing from off her mother.

"One is asleep," said the doctor in a solemn voice, which seemed to go through the heart of Richard Ashbrook, who had followed the doctor into the room.

"But it is the sleep of death."

Farmer Ashbrook uttered a terrible cry. He fell into a chair, and burst into an agony of grief which was dreadful to behold.

His wife, Jane Ashbrook, was dead!

She had passed peacefully and silently away. There was no expression of pain on her countenance, albeit she had died of a broken heart.

The wretch Gregson had suffered death for the murder of young Hopgood, but the fatal blow received by that ill-fated young man was the cause of another death. Jane Ryan had perished therefrom.

It is true she lived for ten years after the loss of her sweetheart, but she never recovered from the effects of the terrible scene she had witnessed, and hers is not a solitary instance of cases of this sort—albeit, the world knows but little of them.

Life is like a fountain fed by a thousand streams that perish if one is dried. It is a silver cord twisted with a thousand strings that part asunder if one is broken.

Thoughtless mortals are surrounded by innumerable dangers that render it much more strange that they escape so long than that they almost all perish so suddenly at last.

We are encompassed with accidents every day to crush the decaying tenements we inhabit.

The seeds of disease are planted in our constitution by nature.

The earth and atmosphere, whence we draw the breath of life, are impregnated with death; health is made to operate its own destruction.

The food that nourishes contains the elements of decay; the soul that animates it by vivifying first, tends to wear it out by its own action; death lurks in ambush along the paths.

Notwithstanding this truth is so palpably confirmed by the daily example before our eyes, how little do we take it to heart!

We see our friends and neighbours die, but how seldom does it occur to our thoughts that our knell may give the next warning to the world!

CHAPTER XLVI.

After leaving Charles Peace in Leather Lane, Miss Stanbridge came to the conclusion that for the future it would be advisable for her to be a little more cautious in her dealings with her old playmate and quondam companion.

She was a lady who had her own battle to fight in the world, and as far as want of principle was concerned she was quite adapted to hold her own against any odds.

Upon returning to her own domicile, she found Alf Purvis in the kitchen, in company with Susan.

"You may have a holiday for the rest of this day, Alf, and to-morrow we will commence business again."

"Thank you, marm!" cried Alf. "May I go out?"

"Yes, where you please; but mind and be home early in the evening. I don't approve of late hours."

The boy sallied forth, and wandered about from one place to another, returning soon after nightfall.

"To-morrow you will have to go out lace-selling," said his mistress, upon his entering the house.

"Yes, marm," answered Alf, in a cheerful tone; "I'll do my best."

In the morning of the following day she brought down from the lumber-room a large tray filled with quantities of "edgings," viz., the kinds of lace used for the bordering of caps, etc.; some braid and gimp, some lace articles—such as worked collars and under-sleeves—and some lace of a superior quality, which, however, was English.

This latter kind, she told him, was called "driz" by the street sellers, and that he should offer it to ladies as rare and valuable lace smuggled from Mechlin, Brussels, and Valenciennes.

The braid and gimp, she said, was very little in demand, and the whole street-trade was now so indifferent that the only way a man could get a fair profit on what he sold was by "palming"—that is, giving short measure.

"Would you like to learn how to do it, Alf?" she inquired; and, without waiting for an answer, she took a yard measure from the table behind, and cried, in a loud street voice:

"Three yards a penny, edging!" Then she measured three yards with her wand, and showed him how she "palmed" the lace by catching it in short with a jerk of the fingers.

"Let me try!" cried the boy, quietly; and in less than half an hour he palmed to perfection.

Young Purvis, when he had accomplished this important piece of manipulation, sallied forth.

He patrolled the favourite "pitches" of the lace business—namely, the Borough Market, Walworth Road, Tooley Street, and Dockhead, Bermondsey.

He told his customers that he was a lace-maker from Millyham, and that the edgings were his own and his old father's work.

This tale, which he related with eloquence and sometimes with tears, worked largely on the feelings of his auditory, and whilst compassionate sailor-girls gazed tenderly on his handsome and grief-stricken features, his sobs extracted sympathy from their hearts.

The next day he went to the houses in and about Regent's Park, and towards Maida Hill. There he sold his pseudo Mechlin to the old dowagers, and his worked collars or "edgings" to their housemaids.

He felt a pleasure in cheating these dames, who, while trying to cheat the Government, were trying to cheat the whole of their fellow-countrymen; but he felt a pang in clipping the measures of those pretty servant-girls, who gave him such bright smiles and words, and to whom pennies were so precious because they were so hardly earned.

However, he consoled his conscience with the Machiavellian maxim, "All's Fair in Trade."

It had become his motto, as it is the motto of those Jesuits of commerce, who say that all is fair which is foul, false, and thievish.

It was his panacea for the heart's qualms, as it is the panacea for heaven knows how many thousands in London who rise and fast behind their counters till they have stolen the price of their breakfasts.

He told his mistress how he had succeeded by chicanery in realising a good sum for her.

She complimented him.

"There's no harm hoodwinking your customers," she said. "Besides, all's fair in trade."

As he repeated this sentence after her he thought that the elder of the two women sighed.

He had ascertained from the servant-girl that this lady's name was Grover.

He lay awake that night, trying to guess who Miss Stanbridge and Mrs. Grover could possibly be.

He did not think they were real ladies. In the first place, he had met them in a house that was frequented by only the scum of the London streets.

Besides that, there was something very different about them to the young ladies who sometimes stopped him to ask questions about his lace in the Bayswater Road or in Grosvenor Place.

Miss Stanbridge, it was true, had the voice and manners of a lady, but in those of Mrs. Grover he had often detected something which reminded him of the rustics among whom he had been brought up

And yet it was extraordinary that they should always go out in the afternoon, which he knew was the fashionable hour for ladies to go out, and dressed in gorgeous array. It was singular.

They could not be bad women, argued the young rogue. They always stayed at home in the evening, and though a great many visitors (whom he was never permitted to see) came after dark, he was shrewd enough to understand that these could not be lovers, because his mistress always took off her fine clothes when she came home.

He also observed that these mysterious visitors were never shown upstairs, but always into a room on the ground floor, and that there Miss Stanbridge came down to them. Peace was the only person who was accustomed to go into the drawing-room, and the boy was under the impression that he was a relative of either one or the other of the two females.

Another singular thing was this: the room upstairs looked out upon the back-yard, as did the kitchen.

He was always sent out by this back-yard, which led through a mews into the street from which Peace had made his escape on the eventful night of the attempted burglary at the jeweller's. He was told never to come in at the front door.

And the ladies themselves always went out and came in by the back way, which, although he was unacquainted with the manner of gentlefolk, appeared to him to be a very eccentric proceeding.

To show you how slight is the step from fraud to felony, I will continue the history of this poor boy who had fallen into the power of one who knew well how to harden a heart for crime.

In Alf's little garret there was an empty book-case. He had often wished there were books in it, and had often thought of asking his mistress whether she could lend him any, for he had no doubt there were some within the mysterious lumber-room, which seemed to possess almost everything that mortal man could think of.

One night he went to bed at eight o'clock, when, much to his surprise, he saw a number of odd volumes in the book-case.

This was a great boon to him, for, as we have already seen, he had always been passionately fond of reading.

He went to the case, and caught hold of one which first came to hand, and, having undressed himself with a rapidity known only to boys, he sprang into bed and at once began to eagerly devour the contents of the volume, which happened to be "The Lives of Celebrated Highwaymen and Pirates."

The work was exactly suited to his taste.

As he read the exploits of these lawless and daring men he was so fascinated that he read without interruption till the candle had died away in its socket.

He lay thinking of what he had read, and watching the thin, dusky light as it crept towards him across the room.

He rose at daybreak, with his eyes red and watery, and his mouth parched.

Slinging his lace bag over his shoulders, he went downstairs into the streets, where he walked for hours with his eyes now drooped upon the pavement, now raised towards the grey clouds of early dawn.

Two hours afterwards a woman stole into his room, with a wolf-like step.

When she saw that the candle had quite burned down, and that there was a book lying on the bed, she gave a terrible laugh, and clapped her hands.

An hour afterwards, another woman entered the room.

But when she saw the candle and the book, her wrinkled face grew painful, and she sighed deeply.

Then she drew a book from her bosom, and placed it on a table by the window, returning the other to the shelf.

When Alf came home to breakfast, Susan asked him what made him look so pale.

His eight hours' work had never seemed so long and weary as they did that day.

He walked about mechanically, and sold but little, for in great towns customers have to be run after, and almost inveigled.

He was thinking of his book, and longing for the night to return.

He even took the precaution of buying a candle in case they gave him a short one to go to bed by.

At tea-time Susan complained that she could not make him understand a word that she said.

He told her that he was very tired, and went to bed an hour earlier than usual.

As he was undressing his eyes fell upon the book which was lying upon the table.

He determined to begin with that, and, as it was such a small one, he thought that perhaps he might be able to read it through.

The first few lines showed him that it was a moral book, which inculcated good principles.

He glanced impatiently down the page, intending to throw it aside, when a sentence caught his eye.

He turned the page, and read on.

It was a book which had been written by a good and earnest teacher for the assistance of those who might be under some peculiar temptation, or on the threshold of some great crime. It was written in simple but beautiful language.

When he had read this book the poor lad sank into a calm and refreshing sleep, and awoke in the morning determined to be honest and industrious, and to think of thieving no more.

That very day he cheated a customer, and chose to believe that he had not done very wrong, and that night he returned to his "Lives of the Highwaymen," and felt relieved when he could not see his good book anywhere in the room.

Next morning as he went downstairs he heard female voices apparently in angry altercation.

He stopped at the door and listened.

He heard his mistress say:

"I ask you again what made you put that book there?"

"I could not help it," answered the other, which he knew by the voice was Mrs. Grover. "I can't tell you how it is, but my heart kindles towards that boy; I feel as if I could look at him for ever. I tremble when I hear his voice. There's something about him which makes me younger and sadder to think of. I won't—nay, I cannot—tell you what I mean."

"You will, perhaps, have the goodness to answer my question," said Miss Stanbridge. "What made you put that book there?"

"I don't know. I tell you again that my heart warmed towards him, and I wanted to—to——"

"You wanted to baulk me; I know that perfectly well without your telling me so—to baulk me!"

"I do not want to do anything of the kind. I have no desire to interfere with you in any way."

"But you do so, nevertheless. After all the time and money I have spent my plans are to be spoilt by a foolish

old woman who does not even know why she wishes to spoil them."

At the close of the day on which Alf Purvis heard the foregoing conversation he was called into the drawing-room, and his mistress congratulated him upon his skill in palming edgings upon the wives of Tooley Street, and Marlow lace as Valenciennes upon the dowagers of Maida Hill.

Alf felt flattered. It was not often his mistress praised him, and when she did so he knew he was in more than usual favour.

"Do as I tell you," said Miss Stanbridge, in continuation, "and you will soon make money. I started in life as you are doing now, and you see that, though I am very young, I am not so badly off. I contrive to live respectably without the assistance of anyone."

Her looks and manner were at this moment most deceptive; anyone who gazed upon her would have said she was a girl who had just been released from the durance of a boarding-school. She was young in face, but in heart she was old as a hag who had lived years in crime.

She spoke of the books he had been reading, and told him several stories about thieves with such eloquence that his interest was aroused, his imagination ran riot, and he was perfectly charmed with her discourse. While all this had been going on, the old woman kept glancing anxiously at Alf, trying to repress her sighs.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "what a jolly time those highwaymen must lead of it! I should dearly like to lead such a life."

"You would be afraid of the prison and the gallows," cried his mistress, bursting out into a loud laugh.

"Not I, marm. I should have to take my chance like the rest of them. To be in prison is no more than being in the streets—so I've heard 'em say who have been there; and one may as well end one's life in the air as on a mattress."

His mistress again laughed, as if he had said something marvellously funny, but Mrs. Grover was evidently greatly concerned, and indeed hurt, at the turn the conversation had taken.

A shade of displeasure passed over her features, and this was not lost upon Alf Purvis, who refrained from expatiating on lives of lawless robbers. Alf therefore lapsed into silence.

Mrs. Grover meanwhile watched his countenance with interest, so also did Miss Stanbridge, who said after a pause:

"Alf, have you ever been to a London theatre?"

"No, marm, I was never inside a theatre in my life," he returned.

"Would you like to go to the play?"

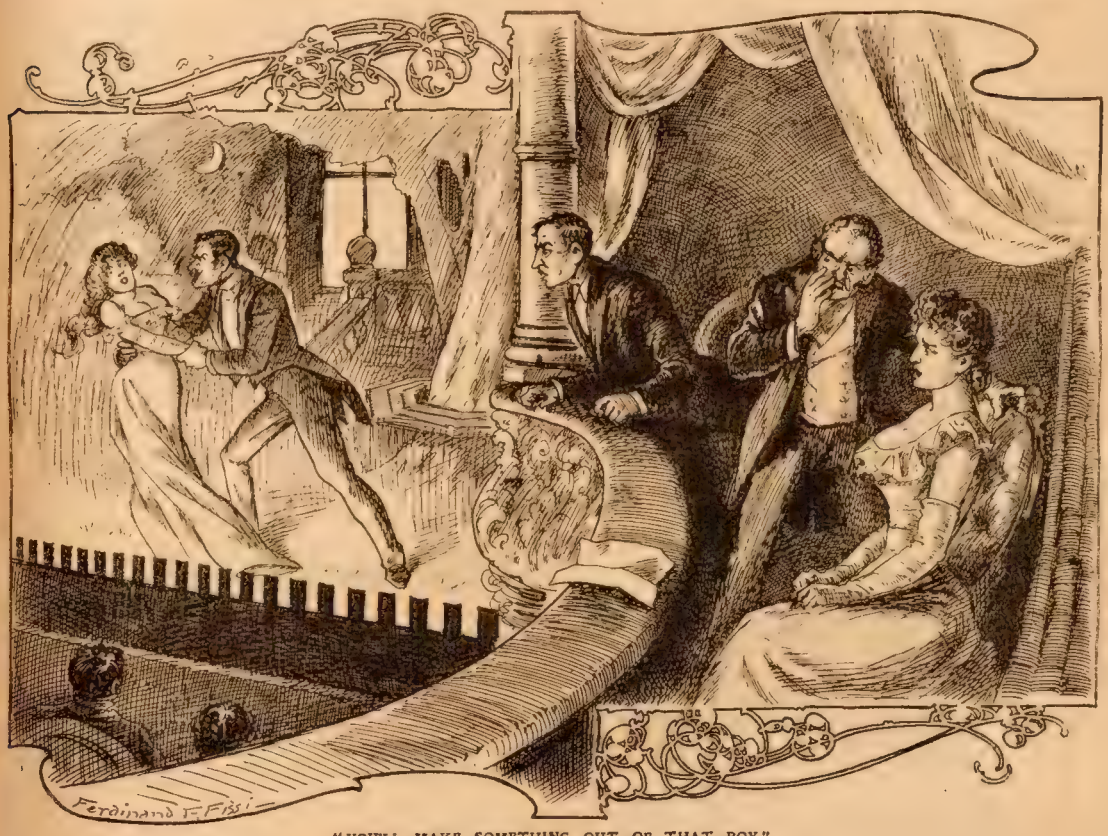
"Oh, rather," ejaculated the boy.

His mistress smiled, and went out of the room, taking Mrs. Grover with her. She returned and said:

"Well, Alf, you shall see a performance to-night. You have been diligent, and deserve a little relaxation."

She was about to put on her bonnet and shawl when Susan entered the room, and said a gentleman wished to speak to her.

Miss Stanbridge inquired the name of her visitor, and the servant girl said it was Mr. Peace. Our hero was at once shown upstairs. As he entered he glanced furtively at the boy, who was told to go into the kitchen with Susan.



"YOU'LL MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF THAT BOY."

"Anything up?" muttered Miss Stanbridge.

"No, nothing fresh," returned Peace. "But you are about to go out—I shall not detain you. Some other time will do as well."

"I was going to take the lad to the theatre," said his companion.

"All right, old girl, I'll go with you if you've no objection."

"I shall be most delighted to have your company."

Peace, Miss Stanbridge, and the boy sallied forth. To the latter's inconceivable awe, a cab was hailed and procured.

Alf sat diffidently on the extreme edge of the back seat, and surveyed the gorgeous interior of the vehicle, from the ragged rug to its dingy roof, as a country parson's daughter views for the first time the vaulted expanse and the hollow-sounding stones of Westminster Abbey.

After half an hour's ride the cab stopped, and the driver coming round to the door informed them that they had arrived at their destination.

They passed through the entrance and gained the hall. Miss Stanbridge paid for three seats, and they were shown into one of the private boxes.

The house was a very large one, and Alf as he gazed

around was lost in wonderment at its gigantic proportions, He had never been in an establishment of this description.

The pit and gallery were crammed with people, those of the lower class predominating. Some of the men were in their shirt-sleeves, many of the women carried in their arms babies with bald heads and sturdy lungs; many coster boys were also present, who were overflowing with merriment and wit, while the atmosphere reeked with the mingled fragrance of orange peel, stale ginger-beer, and corduroys.

As the boy was gazing round the house, the audience were beginning to grow impatient and personal. Having discovered a gentleman in full dress in one of the boxes, a lubberly lad called out in the voice of a stentor:

"Three cheers for the bloke in white kids!"

This was responded to, and assisted with cat-calls and hootings, as they observed the discomfiture of the used-up Belgravian, who had wandered among these barbarians to receive amusement, not to contribute to it.

This was followed by shrill whistling from the gods above, the stamping of feet, and conversation carried on by some of the occupants of the pit with those in the gallery. The noise was perplexing and almost deafening.

"Now, then, you catgut-scrapers," exclaimed a voice, "tune up! If we ain't a-goin' to have any acting to-night, play 'God Save the Queen,' and let's go home!"

A costermonger in the gallery began to chant a well-known music-hall ditty, which was at this time enjoying an extensive share of popularity; numbers of men and boys joined furiously and tunelessly in the chorus, and this, together with the stamping of the feet of those who were endeavouring to keep time to the melody—if such a term can be justly applied to it—served to amuse the "gods," as they are called, most immensely.

Peace could not refrain from expressing his disgust at these proceedings.

He had an ear for music, and the abominable din and clatter overhead disturbed his equanimity, and ruffled his temper.

To remonstrate with the noisy ruffians would be only making matters worse.

The leader of the band at length made his appearance from beneath the stage, and, just as his face filled the trap-door which led into the orchestra, it was struck by a sucked orange, thrown by some miscreant from the back of the pit.

The house laughed till it nearly cried. An effort was made by the police to find out the delinquent, but it was not attended with success.

Miss Stanbridge bought a bill of the play.

The first piece was one of those romantic dramas which small playwrights pillage from the French—a sin which is not visited upon the thief, but upon those who receive the stolen goods—with their ears.

The plot was of such an intricate and impossible nature that Alf Purvis was totally at a loss to understand the meaning of what was going on.

To say the truth, this was a matter of no very great moment.

The tongues of the coster boys had not been idle all this time, and while any good dramatic point was picked out with wonderful acumen, inefficiencies, either in the acting or in the stage management, were treated most unmercifully.

Nor would they permit the play to proceed till they had got a good view of the stage.

"Did you ever hear a more uproarious, ill-behaved audience?" said Peace to Laura Stanbridge.

"It's their way," returned his companion. "If they were not permitted to express themselves after their own fashion the gallery would be empty."

The scenes were shifted—not very accurately, it must be admitted. In a castle at the back of the stage a large gap was left.

Between the first piece and the heavy sanguinary melodrama which was to follow, the bills advertised a comic song by the celebrated Bill Rasper.

This was pretty sure to please the audience, as it was what is termed a topical song, consisting chiefly of hits at popular personages, and sneers at the aristocracy

By this time the half-price had come in, and the gallery presented an extraordinary appearance—a vast black heap slanting to the roof, dotted with faces, and striped with shirt-sleeves.

When there was a clapping of hands the whole mass twinkled as if their dingy hands were so many rays of light.

The rails in front were adorned with the bonnets of the ladies, who did for comfort that which, in the dress circles of the West-end is done for fashion.

These bonnets became marks for the boys at the back, who, seated upon the shoulders of their friends, or upon the spikes which crowned the partitions, played at pitch and toss with nut-shells.

Once more greetings were exchanged between the gallery and the pit, and sometimes family secrets were revealed.

"Then you ain't brought Poll with you, after all?" cried a voice from the pit.

"No," answered a man in the gallery—"no, I ain't. 'Cos why—she's got the hump."

"Oh, Jerusalem! That's the time o' day, is it?"

The comic singer, dressed as only a comic singer can dress, in a chocolate-coloured coat, a waistcoat with a large floral pattern, and peg-top trousers of the most ultra description, and a watch-chain as thick and massive as a ship's cable, now made his appearance.

His nose was deeply tinged with red, and he had an old umbrella of the Mrs. Gamp species under his arm.

He was greeted with loud and prolonged applause.

The orchestra struck up, and the comic gentleman commenced his song.

As he finished his verse he looked up to the gallery to help him out of the chorus, saying, "Now, then, gentlemen, the Hexeter Hall touch, if you please!"

The song was called "Keep your weather eye open, my boys," and it was vociferously "angcord" by the noisy multitude, who were flattered at being permitted to lend their services in the chorus.

At its close the curtain rose for the representation of a transpontine melodrama of the most pronounced and formidable description.

It was a little incongruous, but had, nevertheless, all the elements to commend it to the appreciative audience for whom it had been written by a veteran playwright who dealt in such hotly-spiced commodities.

In the first place, there was a wicked baronet, who persecuted the heroine of the piece. She was, as a matter of course, an innocent and artless seraphic creature, entitled the "Lily of Ludgate."

The aforesaid baronet suborns a ruffian of the deepest die, called "Black Hugh."

This personage has committed an endless number of crimes; he is cast into gaol, from which he contrives, after the approved fashion, to make his escape.

He is followed by a detachment of soldiers (supers), who fire at him as he creeps over the castellated roof of his prison house.

To see him gain the rocks beyond this, and plunge from a giddy height into a foaming cataract beneath, was a sight which, happily, is only to be seen on the stage of a transpontine theatre.

He buffets the waves "with lusty sinews," succeeds in reaching an island in an impossible sea; and from this he puts off on a raft, constructed by himself and a nigger, who is, like himself, a castaway.

He describes this in glowing language in the third act.

Eventually he is shot, and staggers on the stage. All of a sudden he becomes repentant, and makes a dying confession.

After his confession, Black Hugh raised himself up, gave a gasp, and fell on his back as dead as a stone.

The baronet was loaded with chains, and the "Lily of Ludgate" fell into the arms of the rightful heir, who had been carried away in the earlier part of the drama by Black Hugh, who was evidently a favourite actor with the frequenters of the theatre.

He rolled his eyes, and pronounced his words as only an artist of his accomplishments and powers could pronounce them.

Alf Purvis had during the performance of the melodrama been most deeply interested with the action of the piece. His mistress placed her hand upon his shoulder, and asked him if "Black Hugh" was not a bold and fearless man.

"He's a brave chap, but the baronet was the worst of the two, and ought to have been shot instead of Hugh. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, I do, my lad," returned Miss Stanbridge.

"You'll make something of that boy before you've done with him," whispered Peace. "I dare say you find him an apt pupil."

"And what if I do, Charlie?" said the woman, in an offended tone. "It doesn't matter to you, I suppose?"

Peace shrugged his shoulders, but made no reply.

(To be continued.)

THE MURDER BY ANNIE TOOK.

"A woman! Nay, 'tis most unnatural
To call so foul a thing so fair a name."
—CHARLES KELLION, "The Wooing of Life."

IN the early spring of 1878 a young lady giving the name of Mary Hoskings engaged apartments in Ide, a small village situate in the vicinity of Exeter. Ide is a spot where visitors, like the proverbial visits of angels, are few and far between, and it was only natural that the tongues of gossip should wag over the presence of so interesting and fair a stranger as Mary Hoskings.

Her habits, it was noticed, were reclusive and solitude her only companion; she appeared frequently moody and depressed and even dejected, all of which was voted by the neighbours as being most unnatural in a person both young and beautiful. Mary certainly was beautiful, tall and slender in figure, with a pink and white complexion, brown wavy hair, and soft blue eyes; in fact, a summer picture of English girlhood.

She remained at Ide, visited by no one and soliciting no friendships (rather in fact, by her demeanour frustrating all social overtures), far into the autumn of 1878. In October she gave birth to a male child.

Thus was the mystery of her presence in Ide explained to its inhabitants and her character devastated. The little place hummed and buzzed with the scandal; rumour hinted darkly that the unfortunate young woman was known to another world by another name than Mary Hoskings—was, in fact, of exalted station—and sought to hide her shame and ignominy under a show of penury and a name commonplace enough to attract little or no notice. But on occasions like these in places like Ide—occasions, be it remarked, when scandal is tainted piquantly with romance—rumour frequently borders upon hysteria, and in that state is not unfrequently prone to fictitious compositions; wherefore it is not wise to put too confiding a trust in her veracity. The truth was that the strange girl, with the beautiful face and the sorrowing heart, owned no name but that of Mary Hoskings, and was, indeed, far from being in an exalted station of life, albeit she was of respectable parentage.

She lay for several weeks in the mean, shabby bedroom, fevered and tossing fitfully between life's tumult and the quiet waters of eternal sleep. At the end of these dark days, when she was convalescent, a strange gentleman came down to Ide, from no one knew where, and visited the unhappy girl. He was her brother.

When Mary was apprised of his presence she feared to see him, and yet longed for a sight of so familiar a face, wept bitterly, at first declining to give him admittance, but, finally sending for him, rose to meet him with open arms, and fell sobbing on his neck.

Mr. Hoskings was disposed to be stern and unbending with his dishonoured sister, at first suggesting that she should emigrate from England, or in some other way obliterate herself from the fair surface of respectable society. Mary, however, pleaded to return home, to be received once more into the bosom of her family, to be tolerated there if not forgiven.

"I cannot go abroad, Richard, in a strange land, alone and far from friends!" she cried imploringly.

"You risk much by staying here in England. We risk much also by your presence. Our name is at least an honourable name."

"Well, Richard, you are not answerable for my sin."

"True, Mary, but we may share your shame."

And so the brother and sister argued, Mary pleading and Richard, mail-clad in all the virtues, dictating the terms of surrender.

The terms dictated by the obdurate Richard allowed of Mary's return to the parental dwelling on condition that she relinquished all claim and interest in her child.

At first her natural instincts made her revolt in passionate rebellion. Leave her baby! Abandon her own flesh and blood to strangers and hirelings! Infamous thought!

She snatched the little pallid weakling to her breast, wept over it, and vowed, with a thousand passionate protestations of love, that death alone should part her from her infant.

The baby laughed and crowed with frantic merriment; he was evidently endowed with a prophetic soul!

In two weeks' time Mary Hoskings agreed to her brother's conditions, and the only question now that remained to be settled before she returned to her family was how and where to dispose of the unfortunate little bundle of humanity who was the cause of all this trouble and anxiety.

The brother and sister were at first completely at a loss how to face this most awkward dilemma, but the landlady, happily a woman of infinite resource, came to their assistance with a plausible suggestion.

She knew a respectable young party, with children of her own, who for a moderate consideration would be only too glad to take charge of Mary's baby. Her name was Annie

Saw Annie leave the house alone.

Took; she lived in the neighbourhood, and was, needless to say, being of the landlady's acquaintanceship, of exemplary character

"Send for this person at once," said the brother, cutting short the landlady's eulogistic comments on the personality

and history of her friend. He did not care what Annie Took was so long as she was instrumental in ridding his sister from so obnoxious a burden as an illegitimate infant.

Annie Took was accordingly sent for, and arrived in the rourse of the day. She proved to be a person slovenly in attire and of the very lowest order of women. She confessed to a passionate adoration of babies, which fact explained her moderate demands on Mary's purse.

She agreed to take the infant into her home for five shillings a week, for which sum she guaranteed he would be fed and housed like a prince and be nurtured in the lap of luxury. This sounded so promising that Mary closed with her terms at once, and Annie Took left the house with the baby in her arms.

The next day, accompanied by her brother, Mary Hoskings departed from Ide, never to return there, indeed, in this life, never to see her infant more. Perhaps this explains why the baby laughed when the mother wept, and

WHEN HE REACHED HER CELL SHE ASKED HIM TO SIT DOWN.

swore only death should part her from her offspring. Fools speak the truth unconsciously at times, and from their mouths may be learnt a wisdom denied to the learning and philosophy of sages.

Annie Took returned home with the strange lady's baby at her breast and twelve pounds in her pocket, and in the course of a few days a parcel of handsome clothing for the infant was sent to her. This she showed with pride to several of her friends, but a week later one of them asking to view the garments again, she was unable to produce them. However, the friends thought little of this, because Annie was remarkably generous with the whisky bottle, and they argued that it was no affair of theirs if she thought it better to transmute fine linen into "spiritual" nutriment.

The woman did not stay long in Ide, but, as had been her custom for many years, moved restlessly from place to place, chiefly with the object of avoiding such unpleasant duties as the payment of rent and the "bilking" of such persons as had been foolish enough to give her credit in their shops for goods received. Her companions were of the lowest order of humanity, the women prosecuting an unnamable calling, and the men for the most part being engaged in the pursuit of fortune by nefarious and dishonest means. In such company it may be imagined that Mary's baby suffered neglect, grew thin and wizened, and acquired a hard, grating cough.

About this time, writing to a friend, Annie Took mentioned him in the following extraordinary terms:

"Dear little miserable child, he has a cough like an old man."

Indeed, the child was remarkable for exhibiting to an almost preternatural degree signs of old age. He was very small, thin, and sickly, and suffered from a curious malformation of the body, but his face was the face of an old man, which gave him an indescribably weird and uncanny appearance.

After a time, Annie Took removed, with her few household goods, to a house in South Street, Exeter, and there she contracted the friendship of a young woman named Mary Barrell. On May 4, 1878, this Mary Barrell called on Annie, and in the course of conversation asked to see the little child, and remarked on the fact that the cradle had disappeared from its usual place. Annie at first showed some confusion, but subsequently admitted that she had sent the infant to a friend in the country who was looking after it for her for four shillings a week.

Mary Barrell said nothing more about the subject, but at eight o'clock the same evening she was surprised to see Annie Took leave her house alone—surprised because Annie had previously told her that she was staying in with some friends.

Nothing more was heard of Mary Hoskings's child, and nothing, probably, would have been heard to this day, had not a miller, on May 17, when clearing out the mill leet at Powlay, come across the mutilated head of an infant. The man, at first almost fainting at his terrible discovery, shrieked for assistance, and shortly afterwards a crowd of men brought from the bottom of the leet, member by member, the body of

a murdered child. The legs, arms, and head had been carefully severed from the trunk, presumably by some heavy instrument.

The whole of Exeter and the country around blazed up with excitement and horror at the discovery of this diabolical outrage. A wave of indignation swept over England, and the country cried out for the summary identification of the culprit. The police at once took the matter in hand, and with remarkable ingenuity had the mutilated and decomposed parts of the dismembered corpse stitched together and photographed. The photograph showed an infant with a remarkable malformation of the body.

Still, it is doubtful whether the true author of the crime would ever have been brought to justice had not a butcher named Straus remembered that he had frequently seen a woman (Annie Took) with a baby, but which had some time ago suddenly disappeared. He spoke of this to a Dr. Welb who was engaged on the case, and together they decided to call on the woman.

She seemed very pleased at being honoured by such distinguished visitors, invited them into her parlour, and met them with a smiling face. They inquired after the baby, and from their grave manner she gathered the awful nature of their suspicions. She was fiercely jealous of her good name, and seemed shocked beyond words at anybody harbouring a thought of such criminality against her. Yes, she had looked after a baby for a friend, but it had been taken from her a fortnight ago. Who took it? Ah, unfortunately, she was not in a position to say, as the gentleman who called with a letter from the infant's mother was a complete stranger to her. Did she know the mother's name? Oh, yes; Mary Hoskings, but her place of abode was a secret.

This was enough for Dr. Welb and the police, who did not take long to trace Mary Hoskings to the bosom of her eminently respectable family. There one evening the unfortunate girl, depressed in spirits and weak in health, was arrested for the murder of her own child. She seemed dazed, confused, and on the verge of insanity when confronted with the terrible charge, and could do nothing but weep and stammer out incoherent protestations of innocence, affirming that she had never so much as beheld her baby since it had been consigned to the care of Annie Took. She was shown the photograph of the murdered infant, and at once recognised it as her baby, chiefly through the bodily malformation. She was brought up before the magistrates at Cambourne, and there Annie Took, calm and almost dignified in manner, gave evidence against her.

But it was soon seen that the police had not sufficient evidence at their disposal to send the unfortunate girl to trial. Friends, neighbours, and relations were willing to come forward and account to a minute how Mary's time had been spent since she left Ide, and her baby in Annie Took's possession. Ultimately the charge against her was dropped for want of evidence. She left the dock bruised in spirit and broken-hearted, and so, reaping in tears and bitterness and remorse the full harvest of her sin, passes from our sight into oblivion.

Inspector Short, who had charge of the case for the Treasury, now thought it time that he turned his attention to the woman Took, whose sworn testimony before the magistrates had been found wanting in many respects. He visited her, and for the first time showed her the photographs of the infant whose dismembered corpse had been discovered in Powlay Mill leet. She refused to recognise it, and swore that Mary Hoskings's baby had suffered from no such malformation as was apparent in the portrait.

On the other hand, Mary had at once identified her child by the photo. Inspector Short was now convinced that Annie Took was lying to him, and on his own responsibility arrested her at once. She still swore to her innocence, but that same evening, when lodged in gaol, she sent an earnest message to Chief Constable Bent saying that she wished to make a statement to him. When he reached her cell she asked him to sit down and write at her dictation a full confession, and this, after the usual warning, he proceeded to do. She described the murder in minute detail.

"I took the baby out into the yard and laid it on the coal bin, and then I took the wood chopper and chopped its head off, but I had cut its throat first with a razor. The blood ran all over the flags, and it took me hours to mop it up, but I managed to do it in the end."

When she was brought up for trial, she stoutly denied making this confession, and swore that Chief Constable Bent had sworn falsely against her.

The trial took place in the middle of July, the court was crowded to suffocation, the day exceptionally hot, and the wretched prisoner (apparently unconcerned) leant back in the dock and fanned herself with a lace handkerchief. There was only one verdict possible for the jury to find under the circumstances, and that was "Guilty."

Annie Took, still unmoved, nay, even smiling, heard the judge pronounce the words of doom, and then, with a bow, turned to the court and said:

"I only wish to say that Chief Constable Bent has sworn falsely against me, and to thank my able counsel."

With another smile she lifted her skirt and tripped down the steps of the dock into the shadows of the gallows.

She was hanged at the beginning of August in Exeter Gaol, and it was said she smiled upon the hangman.

But there are some people who will go with a giggle into eternity!

Gustave Dupre, the Murderer.

GUSTAVE DUPRE, a Savoyard, was notorious in the Territory of Berne, Switzerland, for his crimes, and in the year 1739 he was executed in Savoy for his many misdeeds.

He was descended from a good family and had received a liberal education; he served as a soldier with some distinction, but was most abandoned in his morals, dissolute in his disposition, void of all principle, without pretence of religion, a gamester, drunkard, and bully.

One of his first exploits was the carrying off of a young woman who was heiress to some property in Berne, and marrying her by force. He next engaged himself as a spy to the French Government, and received considerable sums of money for his work in that capacity.

His sister had married a gentleman of worth and fortune, who more than once had saved him from banishment or imprisonment, which by a variety of crimes he had deserved. However, because this gentleman had once refused to lend him a sum of money, on account of having some idea of the use he intended for it, Dupré resolved to be revenged on him, and he effected this in the following manner.

He persuaded a gentlewoman, with whom he was very familiar, to invite his brother-in-law to her house, where he met him, begged his pardon for what had occurred, and having invited him to drink a bottle of wine with him, he of a sudden picked a quarrel, and having used such abusive language to his brother-in-law as was not to be borne, that gentleman rose up hastily in order to go away. Dupré, who was watching for this opportunity, struck him in the right breast with a dagger, and as he turned to defend himself, shot him in the left breast with a pistol. Having perpetrated this horrible crime, he caused some of his dependents to take the body in the dead of the night, and carry it a considerable distance; he then directed it to be laid down. Then he and his people pretended to quarrel over something, and raised their voices so that they might be easily heard by the people in the vicinity. Dupré at length discharged a pistol, and left it and the dagger by the corpse, hoping from these circumstances it would be thought he was killed in a fray at the place where he was found.

His artifice succeeded so well that at first he was not suspected, nor is it probable that the truth would ever have been discovered, if he had not brought it about by improving, or endeavouring to improve, on his former scheme; for, after settling the affairs of the deceased, and speaking upon all occasions with the utmost horror of his assassination, he offered a large reward for the discovery of the murderers.

This set many people inquiring into the circumstances of the case, and he was at last cited to appear before the Court at Chamberry, to answer a charge of murder preferred against him. Here his courage failed him, for, instead of going to Chamberry, he withdrew from Savoy, and retired to Fribourg. Not appearing when called upon, the process was quickly finished, his estate confiscated, and he himself condemned to be broken on the wheel.

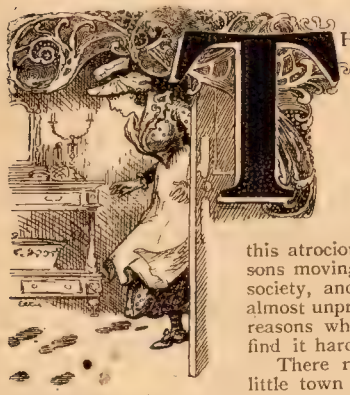
At Fribourg, being sadly distressed for money, he entered into new schemes with some desperate men in Burgundy, and in going to a meeting which they had appointed, he was apprehended by a party of horse, sent for that purpose from Berne, to which town he was conducted, and where he was condemned to be beheaded. He was not at all affected by this sentence at first, believing that as his family was in good circumstances, he should be bought off; but when he found that this could not be done, but that he must die, he lost all patience, prudence, and even common sense.

He uttered bitter execrations against the lords of Berne; he refused to listen to the ministers who came to pray with him, and had to be dragged like a dog to the place of execution. When he was on the scaffold he stamped and beat his breast like a madman, till at length, his hands being tied between his legs and he being held down by two men in a sitting position, his head was pulled backwards on to the block, and the executioner struck it off with one mighty blow.

The Butchery of Mr. & Mrs. Bonar.

The Purposeless Double-Murder at Chiselhurst in 1813.

"The man himself was unable to attribute any motive for this light-hearted, thoughtless act of slaughter. That it is possible to breed such senseless, soulless creatures is indeed a reflection upon the civilising influences of our time."
—*The Times*, August 21, 1813.



THE case of this criminal is one of a very remarkable character, presenting features of a most revolting nature, committed without the most remote cause or provocation, and apparently also without motive. The victims of this atrocious miscreant were persons moving in a good position in society, and the crime excited an almost unprecedented sensation, for reasons which the reader will not find it hard to understand.

There resided at the pleasant little town of Chiselhurst—it was only a village then—in the early part of the last century, an aged and wealthy couple, named Bonar. They lived at a country mansion, known as Camden Place, and their establishment consisted, at the end of May, 1813, of Mr. and Mrs. Bonar, two female domestics, who slept in an apartment at the rear of the house, a groom and coachman, who slept in a room over the stables, and one Philip Nicholson, who had his bed in the hall, and who was the only man who slept in the house besides the master. He was a young fellow of about twenty-eight or thirty, and not unpleasant in appearance and demeanour. It appeared from the account that he afterwards gave of himself that he was a native of Ireland, and had been discharged from the 13th Dragoons while quartered at Dublin in consequence of a broken wrist. Among the servants at Camden Place he was looked upon as a man of harmless disposition and good nature, whose only failing was the then prevailing one of drunkenness. He was so addicted to drink, from all accounts, that he was seldom sober when he could obtain access to ardent spirits. He had lived three years in London as an employee of the City Remembrancer, and had only been three weeks in the employ of Mr. and Mrs. Bonar when he startled and shocked the whole country by committing a crime at once barbarous, useless, and unprovoked.

Nicholson acted as footman at Camden Place. On the night of Sunday, May 30, 1813, Mr. Bonar retired to rest at his usual hour, viz., twelve o'clock, and his wife followed at about two o'clock, having been undressed in the ante-room to the bedroom by her maid.

During the night no noise or disturbance was heard of any kind by the female servants; but when, at half-past six in the morning, one of the garden labourers called up Nicholson, he remarked to him the strange and unusual circumstance that the hall-door and window-shutters were open. The footman, lazily yawning and rubbing his eyes, as though just awakened, expressed his surprise, and then proceeded to leisurely wash and dress. At seven o'clock the female domestics rose, and one of them, on entering the ante-room of her mistress's bedroom, observed footmarks of blood plainly visible on the floor. In great agitation she rushed off to inform the other servants, and on their all going up to ascertain the truth of what they had been told, they began to entertain the most serious fears, and determined to ascertain the truth of their surmises without delay. They entered Mr. and Mrs. Bonar's private bedroom—the door of which was not locked—and their worst fears were at once realised. They found their beloved master and mistress lying dead, Mr. Bonar being on the floor, literally swimming in blood, while the old lady lay on the bed, which was also saturated with gore. It was impossible to imagine a more awful scene. The summer sun was pouring its genial rays through the crevices of the blinds and bathing in light a room which had, in spite of ornaments, pictures, and every evidence of wealth and luxury, been suddenly transformed into something resembling a shambles. A kitchen poker, with which the double crime had doubtless been committed, lay on the floor, and the state of the room exhibited the utmost confusion. Nicholson entered the rooms on hearing the shrieks of the females. He seemed to be in a state of great agitation, was "all of a sweat," as one of the women later declared, and seemed to be very active in moving the bedclothes, by which, if by no other means, his own attire became stained with blood. One of the servants having fainted away, he roused her by dashing some water over her head and face, and then, having informed her that her mistress still breathed, told her to attend to her, and insisted that he should himself proceed at once for medical aid. On the road he was seen to call at one or two public-houses and drink copiously of brandy, but a little after eight o'clock he arrived at the house of Mr. Astley Cooper, the eminent physician, to whom he reported the tragical occurrence. The latter instantly set off to Camden Place on horseback, while Nicholson went to the Red Lion, near Bedlam, and had some more liquor. He met there a man named Dale, who had only recently been discharged from Mr. Bonar's service. To this man he said, "The deed is done and you are suspected; but you are not in it." He remained here for some little time, and then, being by this time quite drunk, contrived to find his way to the police-office at Bow Street, and reported the fact of the murders. He referred to his interview with Dale, and that person was brought to the office, but he was at once able to establish an alibi, and was discharged. Three officers immediately set off for the scene of the crime, and Mr. Astley Cooper had also arrived. He could do nothing for Mrs. Bonar, however, as her wounds were mortal. She lingered till eleven minutes past one o'clock, having been the whole previous time unconscious, and having only once uttered an exclamation. She remarked, "Oh, dear!" in loud and frightened tones, but never spoke again.

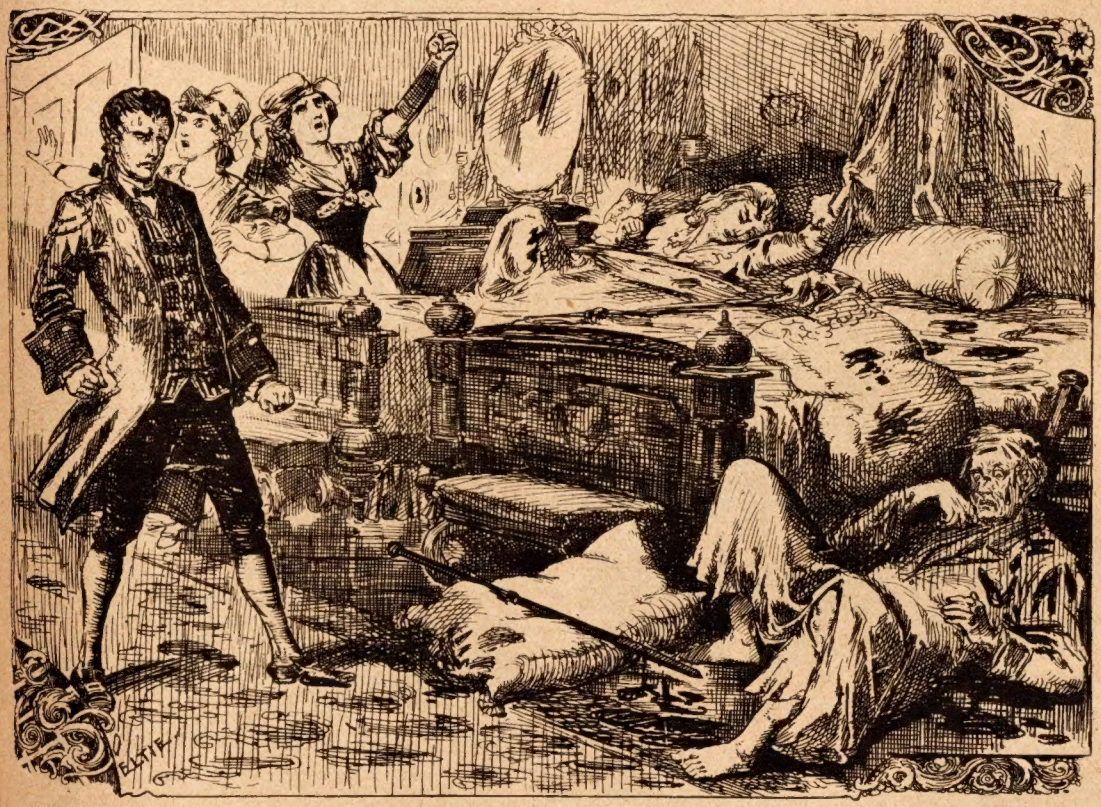
The following is a description of the bedroom where this terrible drama was enacted by one who saw it before the bodies were removed. The spectator says: "We never witnessed such a scene of horror as the bedroom presented. Almost the first object which met the eye on entering was the dead body of Mr. Bonar, with the head and hands steeped in blood; the skull was literally broken into fragments in two or three places, and there was a dreadful laceration across the nose, as if effected by the edge of a poker. His hands were mangled in several places, apparently by the same instrument; there was also a severe wound on the right knee. From the numerous wounds on the body of Mr. Bonar, the swollen state of his mouth, and the convulsive contraction of his knees and hands, it is clear that he had struggled with all his force against his horrid murderer. The most shocking circumstance connected with this spectacle was the appearance of the night-cap, which lay a few paces from the head, drenched in blood, with a lock of grey hair sticking to it, which seemed to have been struck from the skull by the violence of the blow from the poker. The pillows lay at his feet, completely dyed in blood. The manly, athletic person of Mr. Bonar—for, though in advanced life, he seemed to have been a powerful man—gave an afflicting increase of horror to this terrible crime. The view of Mrs. Bonar, though equally distressing, excited more pity than terror; though her head had been fractured in a dreadful manner, yet there was a calm softness in her countenance, more resembling a healthy sleep than a violent death—it might have been supposed that her life had parted from her without one painful effort. The linen and the pillow of the bed on which she lay were covered with blood, as was also the bed of Mr. Bonar. They slept in small separate beds, but so close together that there was scarce room for a person to pass between them. The interval of blood between the two beds told a frightful tale. No slight additional horror arose from the contrast of the spacious, handsome apartment in which this scene of death was enacted. The most heart-moving spectacle yet remained. About seven o'clock in the evening Mr. Bonar, junior, arrived from Faversham, where he was on duty as Colonel of the Kent local militia. In spite of the efforts of Mr. Angerstein, junior, and some other gentlemen, he rushed upstairs, exclaiming, 'Let me see my father! Indeed, I must see him!' It was impossible to detain him; he burst into the bedchamber, and immediately

locked the door after him. Apprehensions were entertained for his safety, and the door was broken open, when he was seen kneeling with clasped hands over the body of his father. His friends bore him away, and hurried him, tottering and fainting, into an adjoining apartment."

The officers proceeded, immediately on their arrival, to investigate all the circumstances of the horrid deed, and an examination of the house clearly exhibited the fact that no stranger had been guilty of the murders. They, having examined the female servants severally, as well as other persons, were rather at a loss on whom to fix their suspicions, but the fact that Nicholson had not returned after he had quitted the house in the early morning directed attention to the footman. A pair of shoes were discovered belonging to Nicholson marked with blood, and which corresponded with the bloody footprints in the ante-room, and Forrester, one of the City officers, was, in consequence, despatched in search of him. After a lengthy and diligent inquiry, he was traced to Whitechapel, and there found drinking at the door of the Three

articulate; but he still persisted in his absolute innocence of the crime. In the course of the same evening the coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Wilful murder against Philip Nicholson," and he was committed to the custody of proper officers. He was subsequently visited by many persons of distinction, whose attention was attracted by the horrible and unusual features of the crime, and the utmost interest was evinced in this horrid murderer.

On Monday, June 7, in consequence of his anxiety of mind, the annoyance by visitors, and the pain he suffered, his wound began bleeding afresh. In a few minutes the flow of blood began increasing to an alarming extent, and fears being entertained for his life, Mr. Astley Cooper was sent for. The miserable prisoner became greatly alarmed, believing that his life was in danger; and he, in consequence, sent for Mr. Bonar, junior, to whom he made a complete confession of his guilt, but assigned no reason whatever for the commission of the diabolical act. In consequence of the statement he made, the garden was searched, and concealed



IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE A MORE AWFUL SCENE.

Nuns Inn. The miscreant was immediately seized, and he then offered a violent resistance, declaring that he'd die before the officers should take him. After a determined, though brief, struggle, he was conveyed to Giltspur Street Compter, charged with the crime, the authorship of which he steadfastly denied. On the Tuesday he was sent down, strongly guarded, to Chiselhurst, in order to be present at the inquest.

During the inquiry, at the moment, in fact, when Mr. Martyn, the coroner, was reading over the depositions of the several witnesses for their assent and signature, an alarm was given that the prisoner had attempted his own life. He had been in custody of two officers, and had requested leave to go into the yard, which was refused; but he was permitted to enter a water-closet in the passage leading to the servants' hall. While there he cut his throat with a razor, which, it appeared, he had concealed in the front of his breeches. The gash was so deep, and it bled so profusely, that it was supposed he could not survive so severe an injury. The head seemed almost severed from the body. Two surgeons from Bromley, who were fortunately present, took the necessary steps to save his life, and, after a short time, he was able to

in a laurel bush was found his body-linen, deeply stained with blood, the neck and front of his shirt being much torn owing to the resistance made by his victims to his attack. He subsequently conducted himself more calmly than he had hitherto done; he regretted the attempt upon his life, and, as much expectation was formed of his death, everything was kept from him that could possibly serve to disturb him. He was at length pronounced out of danger, and was then committed to the house of correction, Coldbath Fields, where he remained until August 17, on which day he was conveyed to Maidstone Gaol for trial. On the 20th of the same month he was arraigned upon the same indictment preferred against him, to which, on the advice of his friends, he pleaded not guilty. The jury, however, speedily found him guilty, and he was condemned to death by Mr. Justice Heath in the usual form.

Immediately after the sentence, the prisoner put in a paper and desired it to be read. The judge said that this course was irregular, but having glanced over the document, he told the jury that it contained a confession of the crime, which the murderer imputed solely to excessive drinking. The state-

ment was full of scriptural allusions, and the only part of it bearing actually on the crime read as follows:

"With this dread sentence full in my view, I do most solemnly declare, and I desire this declaration to be taken as my dying words, that I alone was the base and cruel murderer of my master and mistress, that I had no accomplice, that no one knew or could possibly suspect that I intended to commit these barbarities, that I myself had no intention of committing these horrid deeds save for a short time before I actually committed them, that booty was not the motive of my fatal cruelties. I am sure the idea of plunder never presented itself to my mind."

The signature was in Nicholson's own handwriting, the rest appeared written by another hand.

Monday, August 23, was fixed for the execution. At about noon, the preparations for the removal of the prisoner being nearly completed, Mr. Bonar, accompanied by his brother and Mr. Bramston, the Catholic clergyman, had another interview with the unfortunate man, soon after which the hurdle, or sled, which was in the shape of a shallow box about six foot by three, was drawn up to the gaol door; at each end was a seat capable of holding two persons. Nicholson, double-ironed, was first placed in it, with his back to the horses, he was also pinioned with ropes, and round his shoulders was placed the fatal cord; by his side sat the executioner, opposite to the prisoner the Rev. Mr. Bramston took his seat, and by his side sat one of the warders with a loaded carbine. Everything being in readiness, the procession advanced at a very slow pace towards Penneden Heath, which is a mile and a half from Maidstone, on which was erected a temporary drop, which had a platform raised seven feet from the ground, large enough to hold about a dozen persons. A little before two o'clock the hurdle arrived, and stopped immediately under the gallows, when Mr. Bramston and Nicholson knelt down on it and remained for some time in prayer. Some time previous to this, Mr. Bonar arrived on the ground in a post-chaise, and took his stand within twelve yards of the fatal spot, with the front windows full on the gallows, these being open. So anxious was this bereaved son to get from the miserable man his very dying words as to whether he had either motive or accomplice, that a person was deputed to ascend the platform after the cord was around the prisoner's neck, and to ask him questions upon the subject of the murder. The dying man repeatedly declared that he had acted alone throughout. "He died," says a spectator, "unusually hard, being repeatedly convulsed."

Offered a violent resistance

HOW AN INGENIOUS YOUTH TRIED TO ESCAPE PUNISHMENT FOR FORGERY BY FORGERY.

Kissack's Futile Forgery

"Oft expectation fails, and most oft there
Where most it promises."
—SHAKESPEARE,
"All's well that ends well,"
Act II., Sc. 1.

IN these days of the telegraph and of rapid means of communication it is comparatively rare for a forgery to be really successful for long; but when letters took several days to reach distant parts of the kingdom, and when business-men were more confiding than they now are, the calling of a forger was not nearly so dangerous as it now is, and offered several attractions to the cautious criminal. Among those who were attracted by the ease with which money could be obtained by means of forged paper was one Edward Kissack, a Leeds youth, who was originally employed as a warehouse boy, but who abandoned steady though unremunerative toil for the more lucrative though precarious pathways of crime.

Kissack graduated in criminality in the Isle of Man, where in the course of four short months he managed to swindle the tradesmen out of at least fifty pounds. The island then became too hot for him, and he went to London, not, however, before he had obtained several particulars concerning the principal houses in the land of the Manxman, which he was determined to turn to his own account when in the Metropolis.

On arriving in London, he took lodgings in the Borough, and his landlady noticed that he was very much at home, and seemed to be always engaged in writing letters, which he destroyed as soon as he had completed them. Several weeks went by; meanwhile the slender store of money which Kissack had brought from the Isle of Man was decreasing, and then he set to work to obtain more.

Knowing that it would take several days for a letter to reach Douglas, he decided that his first essay in the art of forgery should be at the expense of Messrs. Holmes and Co., bankers of that island, whose London agents, he knew, were the firm of Masterman and Co., in the City. Having prepared the document by means of which he intended to obtain money, he stepped into the Bell Tavern, in Gracechurch Street, in the afternoon of July 12, 1838, and ordered some refreshment. He then inquired whether the "ordinary" was still being served, and, being informed that he was too late for lunch, asked to be supplied with a steak and vegetables, which were served in due course. To gain the confidence of the landlady, he chatted to her while he ate, and when his meal was finished, and he had paid his bill, he asked her if she had a young man who would go to Masterman's Bank and draw a bill for him. As it happened, the landlady, Mrs. Rough, had dealings with the same firm, and so readily replied that her little son would

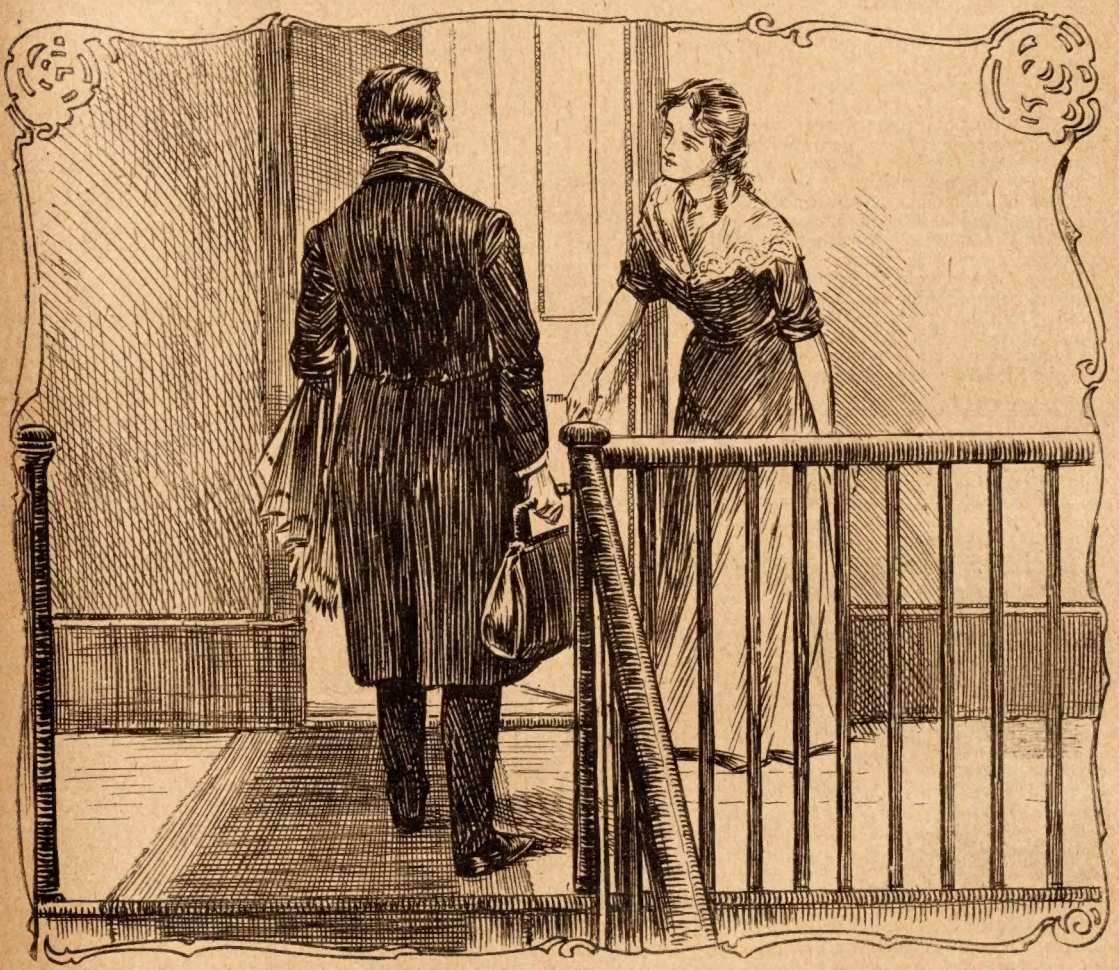
take the letter round to the bank and bring back the money. The boy was called, and sent off with a sealed envelope, and Kissack sat down to wait for the cash to arrive. As time went on, he got a little nervous, and, telling the landlady that he would go up the road to meet her son, and that, if he missed him, she was to keep the cash for him till he returned, he went out.

Meanwhile the boy had presented the envelope to the cashier at Messrs. Masterman's, and, on its being opened, it was found to contain a bill for £75, drawn in favour of Edward Kissack or bearer, and apparently in the handwriting of Mr. James Holmes, of the Isle of Man Bank. This document would have been cashed at once but for Kissack being over-anxious and enclosing a letter, signed "James Holmes," which was obviously not the work of a literary man. The letter requested Messrs. Masterman to cash the bill at once, for Edward Kissack was a very respectable young man, residing in the Isle of Man, and was desirous of returning there immediately. The tenor of this letter made the cashier suspicious, for it stated that the bill was given to Kissack only a few days previously, when he was in the island, and yet it was drawn at twenty-one days. Accordingly he told the lad to go back to the tavern, and, when he saw Mr. Kissack, to call a constable at once, and immediately notify the bank.

The lad returned home and waited for Kissack, who, fearing that something was wrong, waited till seven in the evening before he called to ask for the money. He was then given into custody and charged with forgery.

Fearful of being convicted, young Kissack still thought he saw a possible loophole for escape, so he bribed the turnkey of the Giltspur Street Compter, where he was confined, to provide him with writing materials and to convey a letter to the post for him.

The letter was addressed to Mr. Richardson, landlord of the Yorkshire Tavern, in Douglas, and enclosed two other letters, duly sealed and addressed. The epistle to the Boniface was long and rambling. It commenced by stating that the writer, who called himself "Richard Pettifar," had reached London, and was glad to get away from the Isle of Man on account of the scandalous nature of the people who dwelt there, and adding, incidentally, that he had "deceived a few of them to the extent of about £50." Pettifar then says that he had the pleasure of seeing "her most gracious Majesty crowned, attended by all the foreign noblemen, kings, queens, etc." After this little piece of fiction, he enters upon the real business of the letter, which was to ask Richardson to post the two enclosed packets, addressed, respectively, to Messrs. Masterman and Co., and to Mr. Edward Kissack, in the Giltspur Street Compter, impressing upon him the urgency of doing so at once, and adding that as a reward he would send him five pounds, for if the two packets reached their destination within a day or two the writer would benefit to the extent of £100.



ON ARRIVING HE TOOK LODGINGS IN THE BOROUGH.

Instead of taking the packet to the post, however, the turnkey opened it himself, and his curiosity led him to examine the enclosures to Messrs. Masterman and Mr. E. Kissack. Then the ingenuity of his prisoner was apparent. Knowing that some days would be occupied in communicating with Messrs. Holmes, and receiving his reply, Kissack had written these two letters in Holmes's handwriting. The one to Masterman and Co. stated that the writer, Holmes, was astonished at his agents refusing to cash the bill, which was no forgery, but was genuine. He expressed his opinion that Kissack was quite incapable of doing anything underhand, and suggested that immediately on receipt of the letter Messrs. Masterman should go to the magistrates and obtain poor Kissack's release, should at once cash the bill

for him, and compensate him handsomely for the indignity to which he had been put.

This was ingenious, for there is little doubt that Mastermans would have believed that they had been mistaken when they received this letter in exactly the same handwriting as the bill, and would have asked for Kissack's release. When the letter from the real Holmes arrived, the prisoner would have been discharged, for the Isle of Man banker would at least lose one post in looking over his books and replying.

The letter addressed to Mr. Edward Kissack also purported to be from Holmes, and regretted the unfortunate mistake which the London firm had made. It concluded thus:

"This is to give satisfaction to the Lord Mayor of London, and other magistrates, that I declare the bill for £75, which you have presented to Messrs. Masterman and Co., is perfectly correct, and my own handwriting, and can assure all there is no forgery in the case. I therefore beg, after the Lord Mayor and magistrates have read this, they will liberate you from prison, and compensate you for detaining you so long a time. . . . Your brother is impatiently waiting to see you."

These documents were handed over to the prosecution, and on their production in the Lord Mayor's Court, Kissack fainted. When he had been restored, the magistrate said that the youth had devised a very ingenious scheme for escaping punishment, and but for the vigilance of the turnkey, would undoubtedly have escaped, for Messrs. Masterman and Co. had not heard from Mr. Holmes. As it was, the prisoner would be committed for trial.

Then Kissack broke down, and wrote a piteous letter to Holmes, begging him not to appear against him, and entreating him to intercede with the authorities for him. His appeal, however, was in vain, and when more formal evidence had been given, the letters were put in by the prosecution and Kissack was sent to transportation for fourteen years.

SUICIDE FROM STRANGE MOTIVES

WEAK-MINDED individuals—a prey to every emotion and unable to successfully wage the battle of life—have put a period to their existence for causes which must appear very trivial to those of tougher fibre and better mental and bodily health, to whom life is a boon and a blessing not idly to be thrown away. A few instances of suicide from strange or trifling motives may not be without interest, and may serve to show that the principles of hari-kari, or the happy despatch, are not confined to our yellow friends, the semi-civilised Japanese.

A few years ago, at Arles, in France, a boy of fourteen blew his brains out with a saloon pistol because his father had taken under his protection three young children, the offspring of his eldest son. He considered this an act of injustice, and killed himself as a practical protest against it. Curiosity as to the after-life has brought about many a suicidal death. Two young boys—natives of Florence—were arguing the question of a future life with some heat one fine summer afternoon in the year 1886. The younger, seemingly worsted in the verbal conflict, suggested that the matter should at once be put to the test and the great mystery solved. They accordingly shot themselves with a brace of pistols belonging to their uncle, and died instantly. This case resembled in its painful details that of the two youths in Moscow who, being evidently of a self-analytical mind, committed suicide in order, as they said in a letter to a near relative, to "rid the world of a pair of fools."

An East-end bookmaker—he was very well-known in the Whitechapel Road—cut his throat at his lodgings in June, 1891. In a letter he wrote to his brother he stated that he had been exhorted to back Common for the Two Thousand and Derby of that spring, but had, although laying the horse for large sums, failed to back it himself for a penny piece. This negligence, he said, and the fact that he had wilfully missed such an admirable opportunity of winning a fortune, had so preyed on his mind that he felt that he could endure it no longer, and must "close accounts" with life. Yet he left seven thousand pounds to his widow.

Sir Charles Bell, formerly surgeon of the Middlesex Hospital, used to relate a story of a very strange suicide, the result of a sudden impulse. He went one day in London to a barber's shop to be shaved, and happened to say to the knight of the brush and razor that a man had just been brought into the hospital with his throat cut, adding that if the would-be suicide had only known something of the anatomy of the neck, he could very easily have effected his instantaneous death. The barber showed great interest in this account, and, at his request, the eminent surgeon explained to him the formation of the throat, and indicated the exact spot at which a wound would be inevitably fatal. Almost instantly after the man left the room, without stopping to complete the shaving process. Sir Charles waited for some time for his return, but at last went out also. He found the barber lying on the ground behind the house with his throat cut at the precise spot which the surgeon had described as the most vital part of the neck. It is likely, as an explanation of this, that the man was suffering from incipient insanity, which the crisis had suddenly brought into activity.

"Your heart is slightly affected, but not so severely that, with care, you will not live to a ripe old age," his doctor remarked to a wealthy gentleman residing at Bradford a few years ago. The patient pondered over these words, and morbidly conjured up visions of sudden death at all hours of the day and night. Before six months had passed, he hanged himself, in order, as he showed in a statement he left for the coroner, "to end this suspense and die in my own chosen manner."

Leaves from Our Notebook.

A Scandinavian Cure.

CONSTANT drunkards are cared for in an effective manner in Norway and Sweden. The penalty is close confinement, and during incarceration they are fed on bread and wine, no water being permitted to pass their lips.

Even the most habitual inebriates soon tire of the wine.

The Juryman's Reason.

THEY were talking over the just-recorded verdict at the local tavern and one of the jurors was asked what the jury thought of the case.

"Well," he said, "I don't mind telling you this, that the whole of the eleven were dead against me at the start."

"Oh," said his friend, "is that so? Then you were the one who held out for a verdict of 'Not Guilty'?"

"I was, sir. I am the prisoner's brother-in-law, and I knew that I'd have to support his family if he went to gaol—seven of 'em. Not guilty? Of course he's not guilty!"

REPLIES TO QUERIES

ENGINEER (Putney).—The housemaid did not confess. Lee will be at liberty very shortly. There was a perfectly rational explanation of the drop failing to act, as we have been at pains to describe.

JOCK HORTON (Leeds).—Yes, we find the record of your father's crime. He is honoured by inclusion in Haydon's secret pages! You seem rather proud of the fact that your progenitor was hanged.

UXBRIDGE READER.—It was Superintendent Dunham who arrested Jones. The victims numbered seven. You say nine, but surely seven will satisfy you. Refer to CRIMES No. 34, and you will learn all the facts.

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